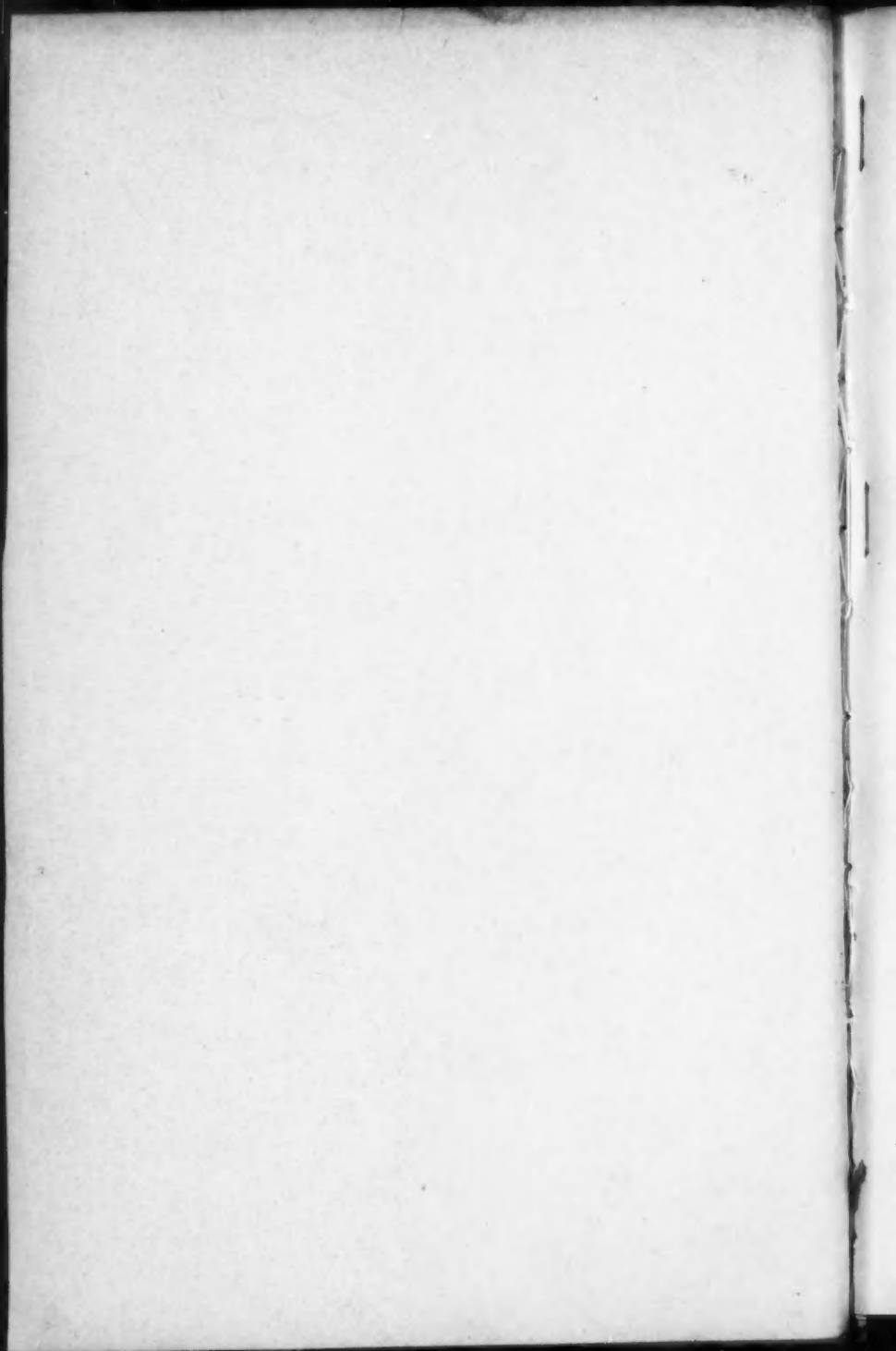


# *The Railroad In Literature*

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*The Railway & Locomotive  
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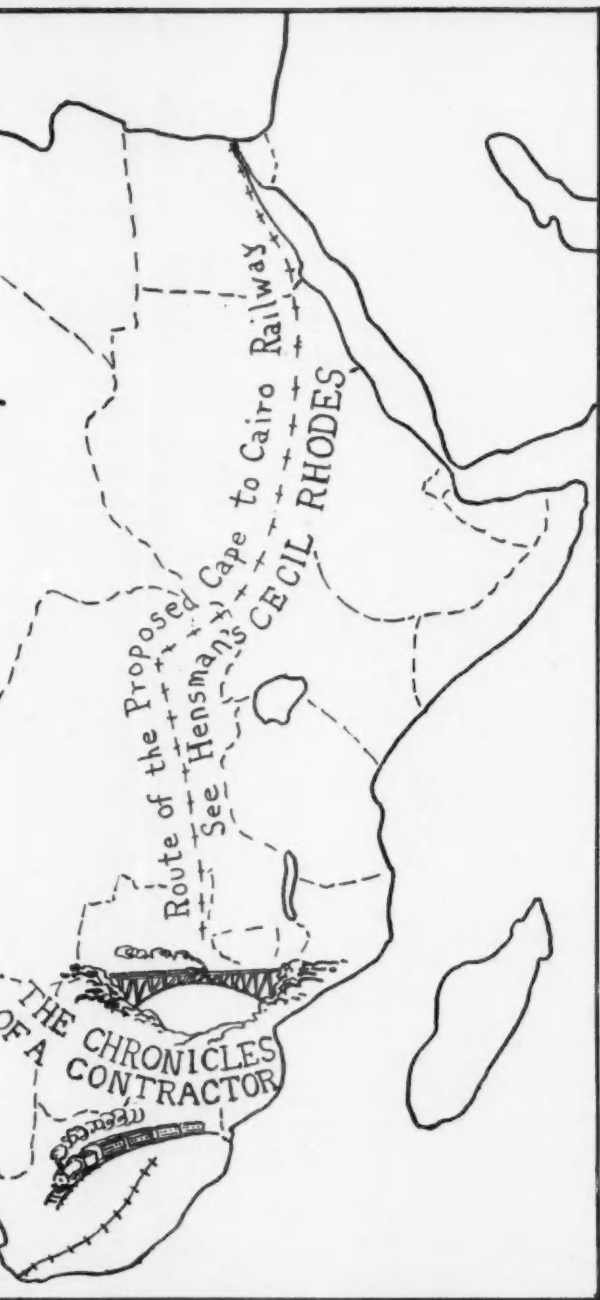
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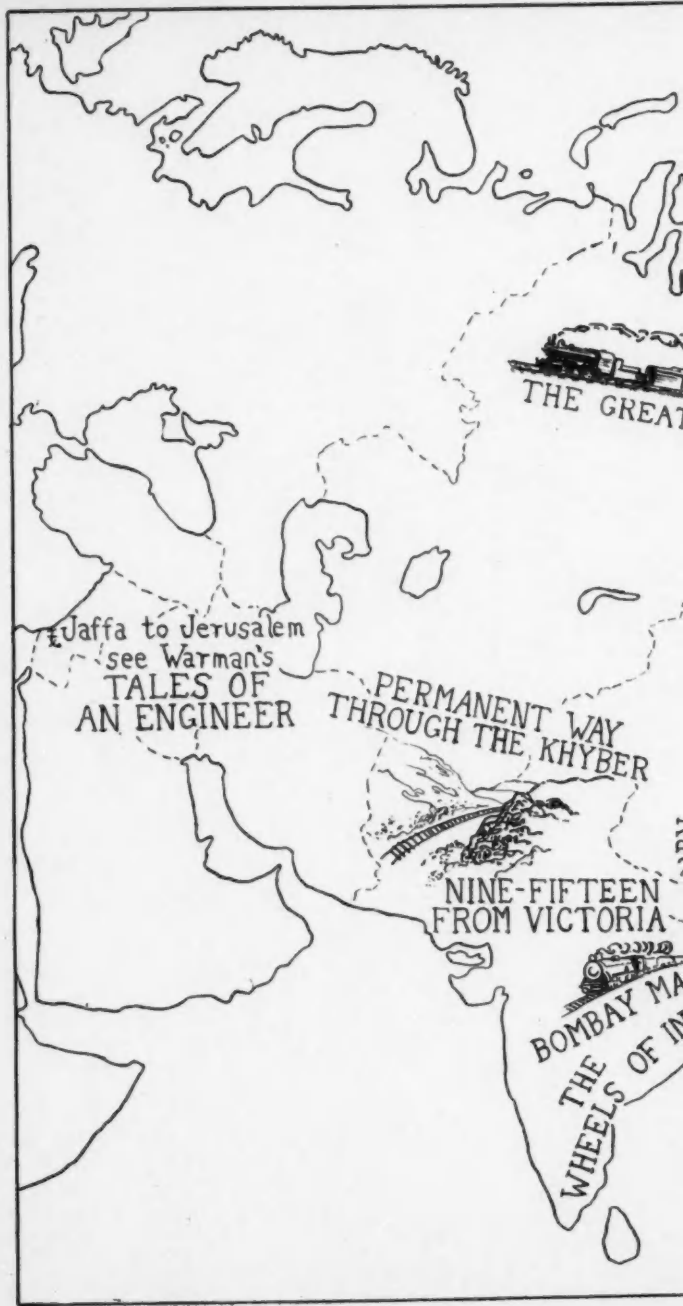
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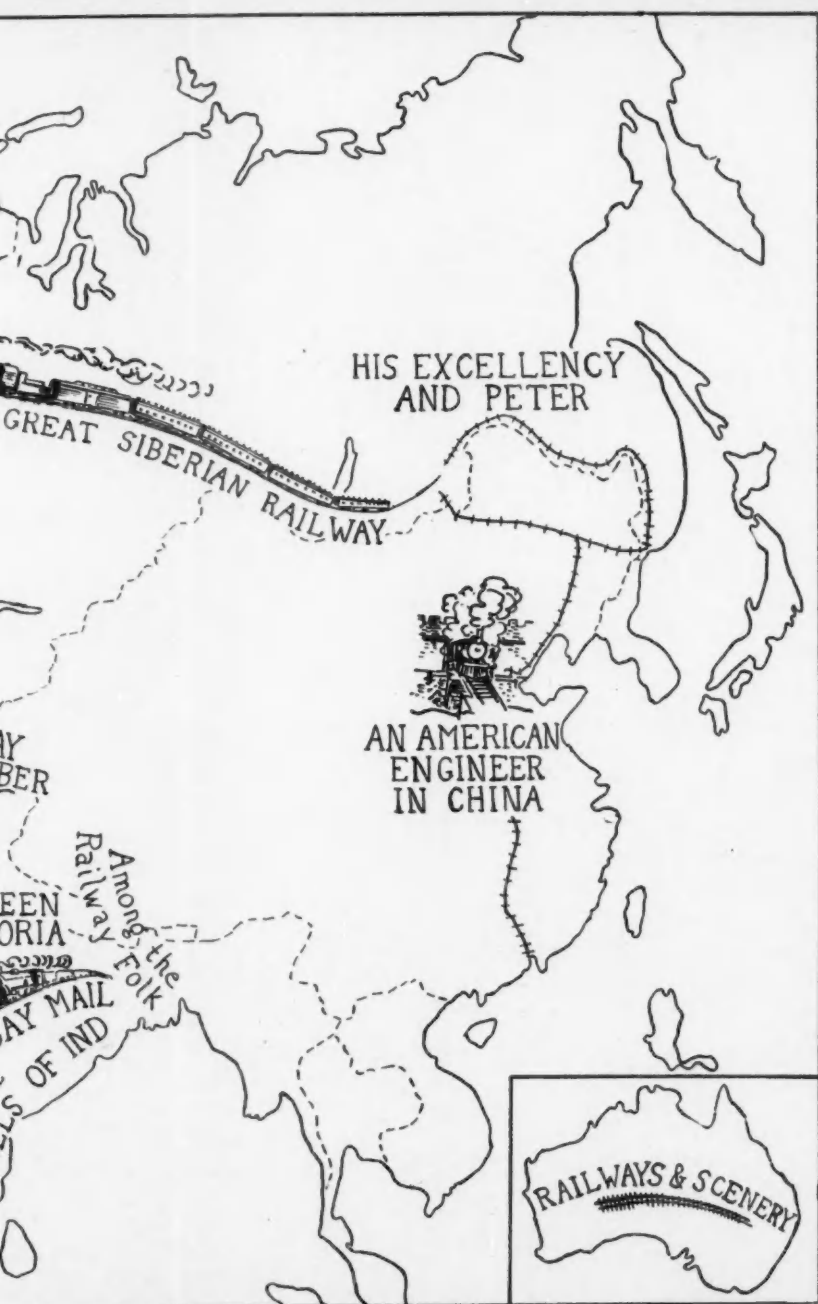
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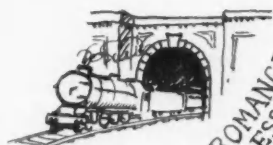
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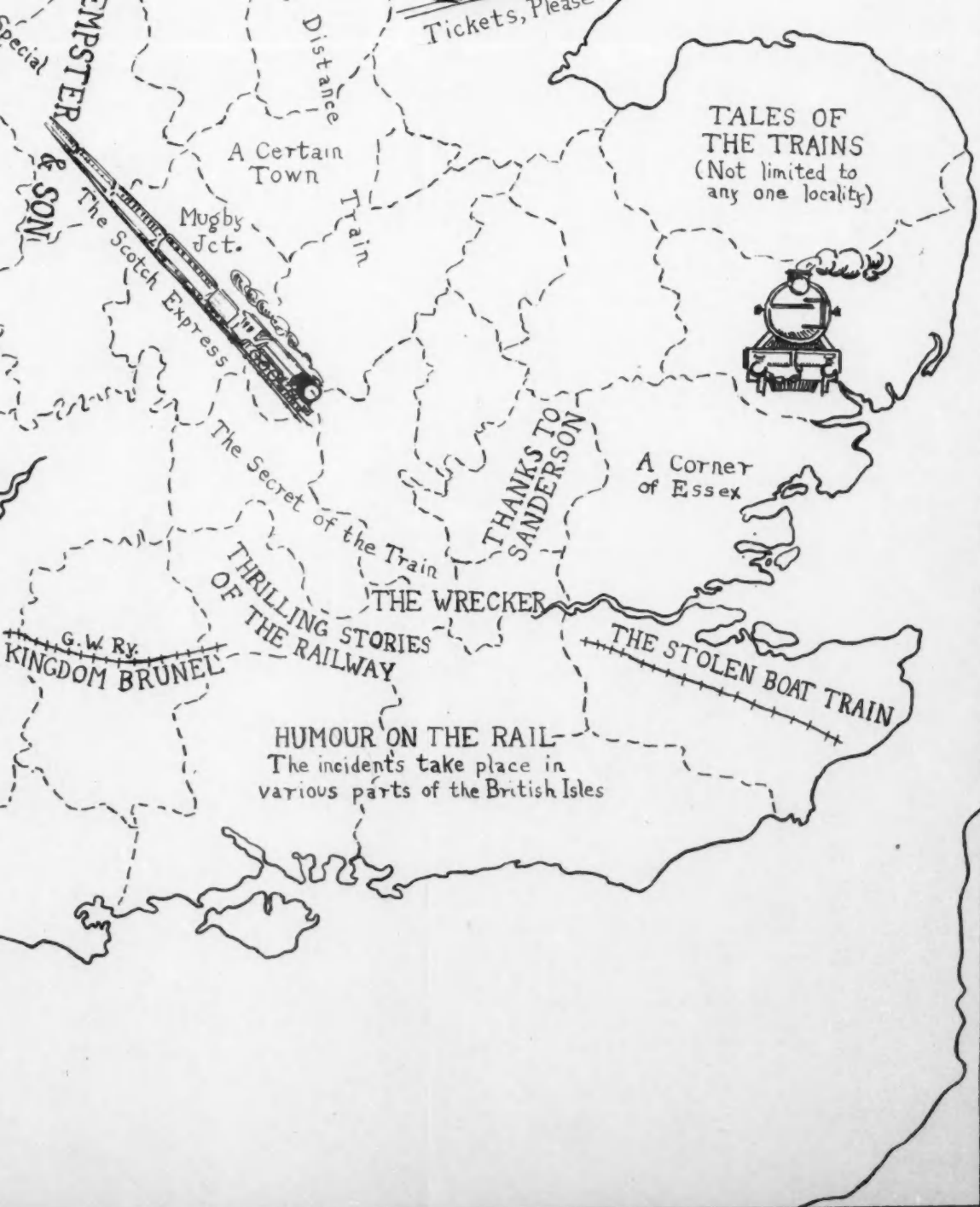
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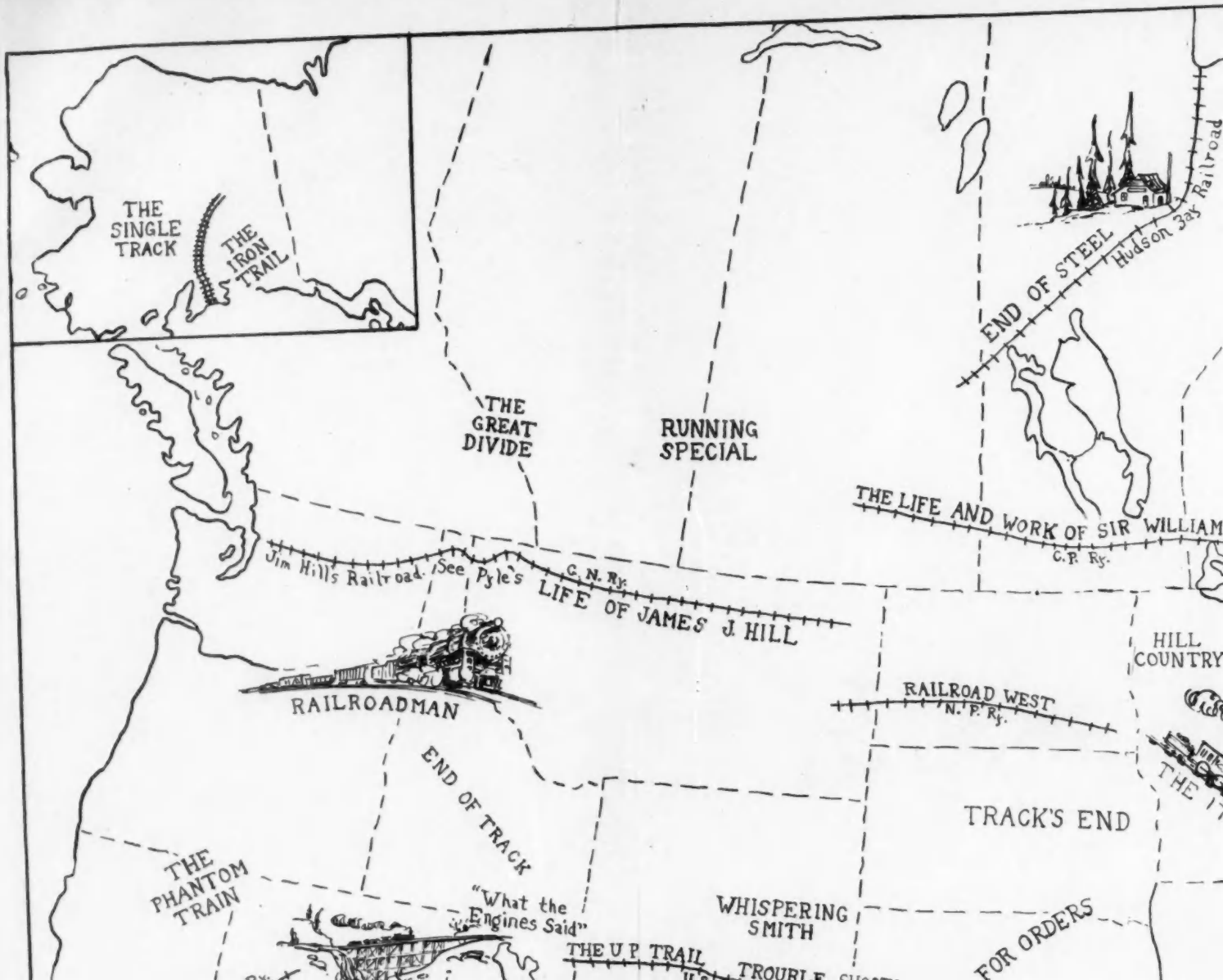
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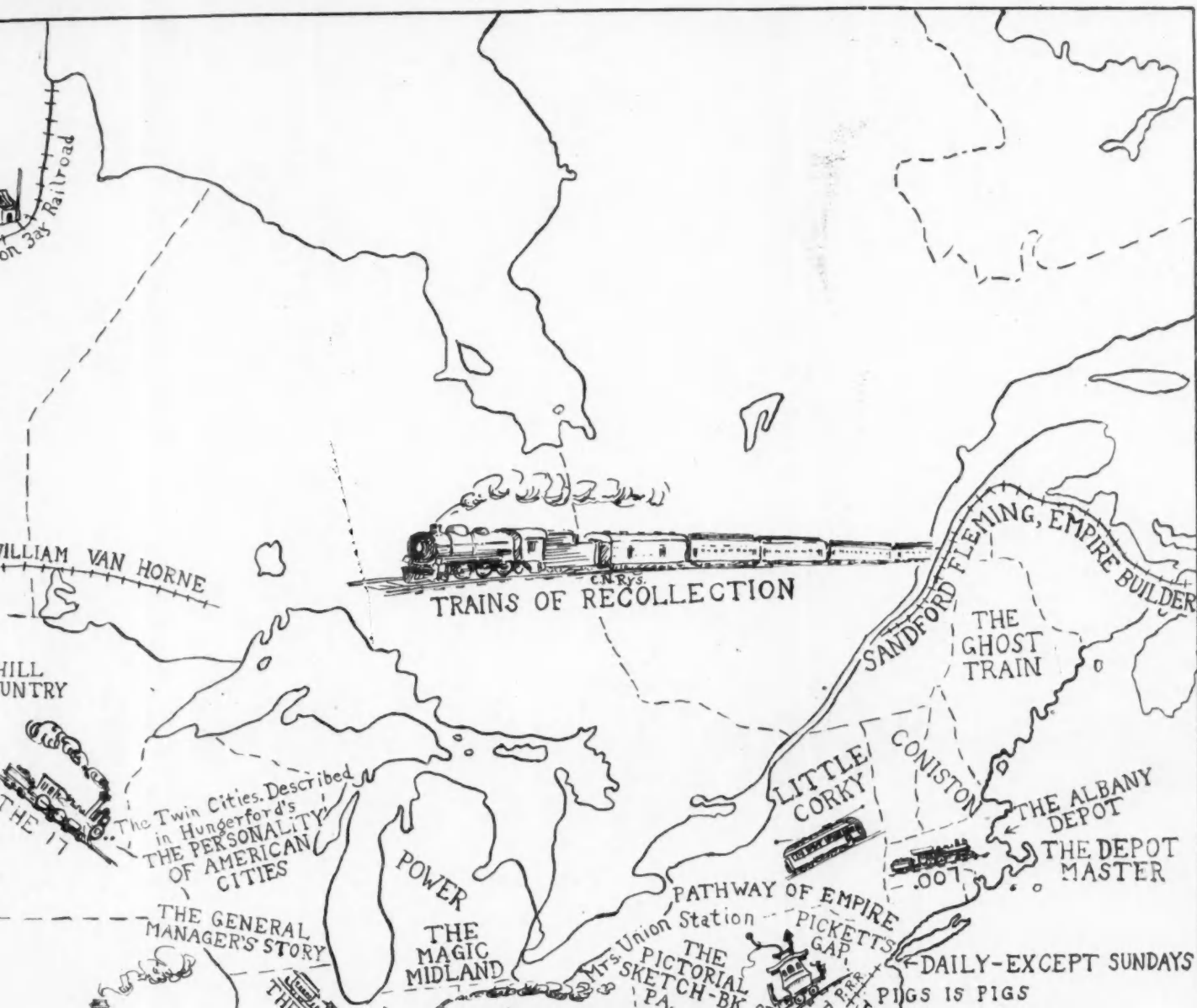
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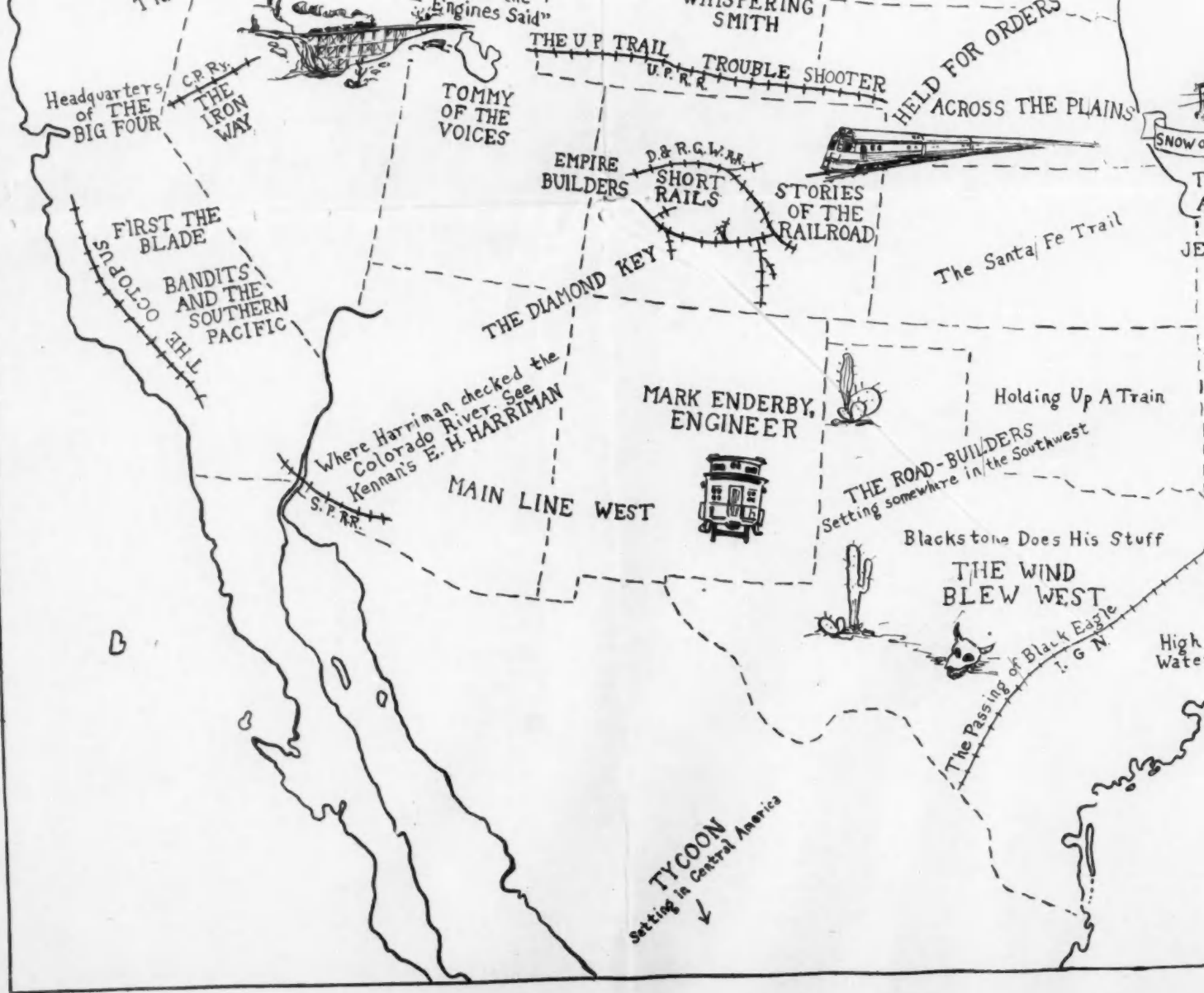


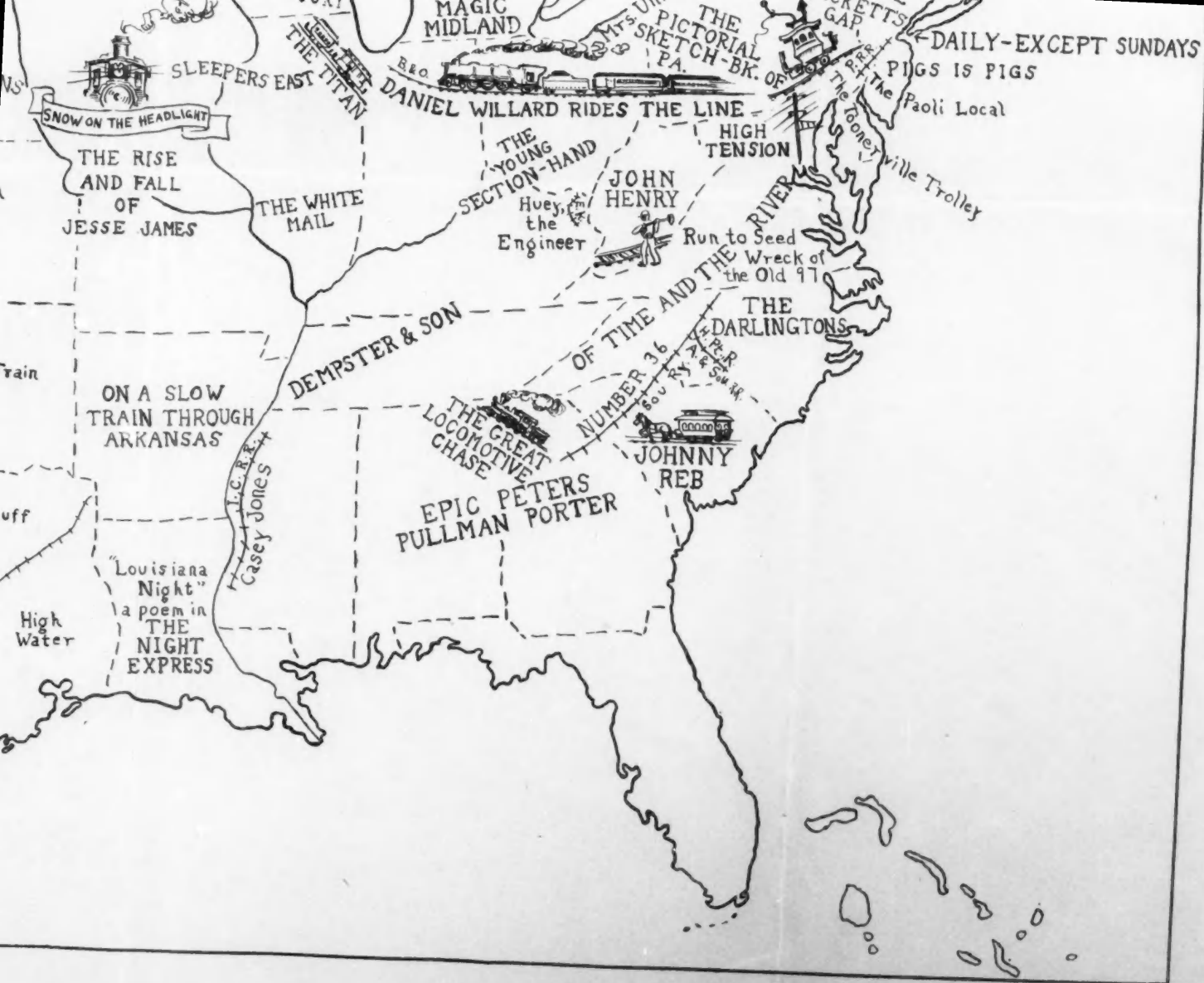
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# The Railroad In Literature

BRIEF SURVEY OF RAILROAD FICTION, POETRY, SONGS, BIOGRAPHY,  
ESSAYS, TRAVEL AND DRAMA IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE,  
PARTICULARLY EMPHASIZING ITS PLACE IN  
AMERICAN LITERATURE.

*By*

FRANK P. DONOVAN, JR.

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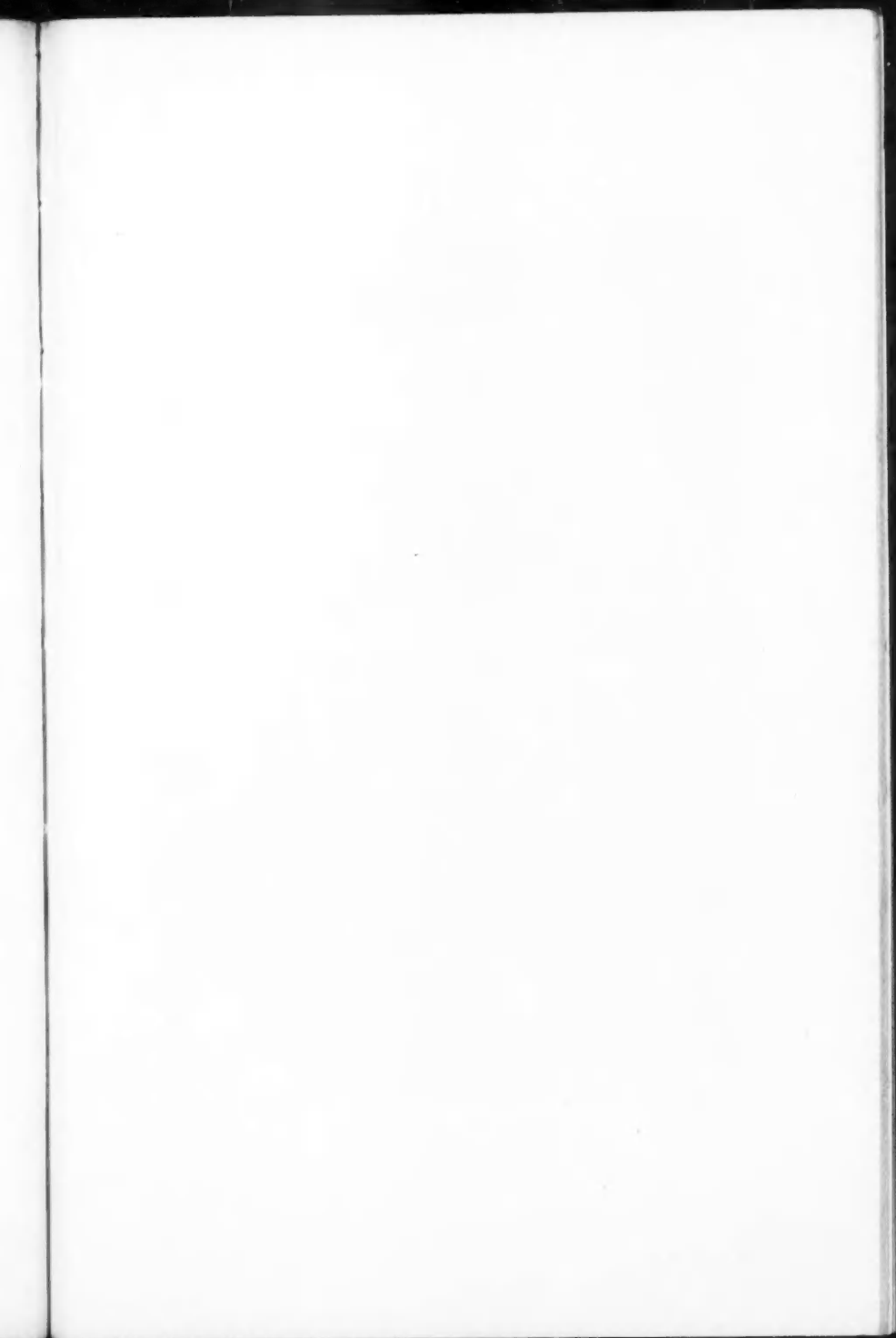
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FRANK HAMILTON SPEARMAN  
Dean of Railroad Novelists

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How many of our members recall with delight their thrills as they read the pages of "The Young Conductor", by E. S. Ellis, "The White Mail", by Warman or the other juvenile books when they were boys? And how many of us looked through the card index in our local library to see if there was a story on our favorite subject we had overlooked? Perhaps the kindly librarian, somewhat amused by our obsession drew from out of his desk a new book on this subject that he had been saving for us. Those were happy days when we too were fired with ambition to sit on the right hand side of a locomotive.

It has remained for one of our members to arrange and to compile this work—The Railroad in Literature. The amount of time the author has spent in his studies and his perseverance to acquit himself in this task is just one of those many worth while efforts that our members are doing quietly in their daily lives, in their spare moments. That the author has nobly acquitted himself, I'm sure all of our members will agree.

On account of the size of this publication, it is one of the largest this Society has ever published, our Directors have authorized the increase in price but no owner of a copy, after reading it, will ever question its value.

## Preface

There are countless volumes dealing with the historic, economic, technical and romantic aspects of railroading which are for the most part well catalogued and comparatively easy to find. But the surprisingly large numbers of books of a literary nature dealing wholly or partially with railways are seldom classified as such, and for this reason they are extremely difficult to locate. The following chapters have been written primarily to acquaint the reader with these works. No attempt has been made to evaluate this railroadana by any hard and fast literary standards but rather to show its interpretation of a sector of life especially in relation to the American Scene.

Considerable space is devoted to foreign publications in general, but to the English in particular. We are prone to assume a smug detached attitude and forget how deeply we have drawn on the rich culture of the Old World, or how the basic traits and characteristics of the average American are essentially of a foreign origin. The only all-American novel is an Indian tale, and with few exceptions it is not worth its salt unless it deals with some alien settlers to lend contrast and variation. More and more the real patriotism in modern society must be permeated with a strong tinge of internationalism lest it fail to keep in step with twentieth century improvements in transportation and communication. Not having traveled abroad the author may have formed certain immature judgments and arrived at some hasty conclusions.

If on the one hand there may be a tendency to divest our own literature of every vestige of foreign heritage, there is, on the other hand, a disregard for the minor and seemingly petty incidents which are associated with the American railroad in one form or another. For this reason mention is made of the slow train jokes, drummer's yarns, cartoons of small town folk, cheap paper-bound thrillers and booklets on trolley touring. The trolley, especially, has never been accorded its rightful place as a link between the urban and rural communities in the pre-automobile era. To quote some of Anne Campell's verse, there were many sections of the United States—

Where the trolley winds  
Up hill and down,  
Where the trolley binds  
Countryside and town.

Perhaps too much stress has been laid on the electric railway but I have been a reader of the Toonerville Trolley ever since my early 'teens and cannot help myself.

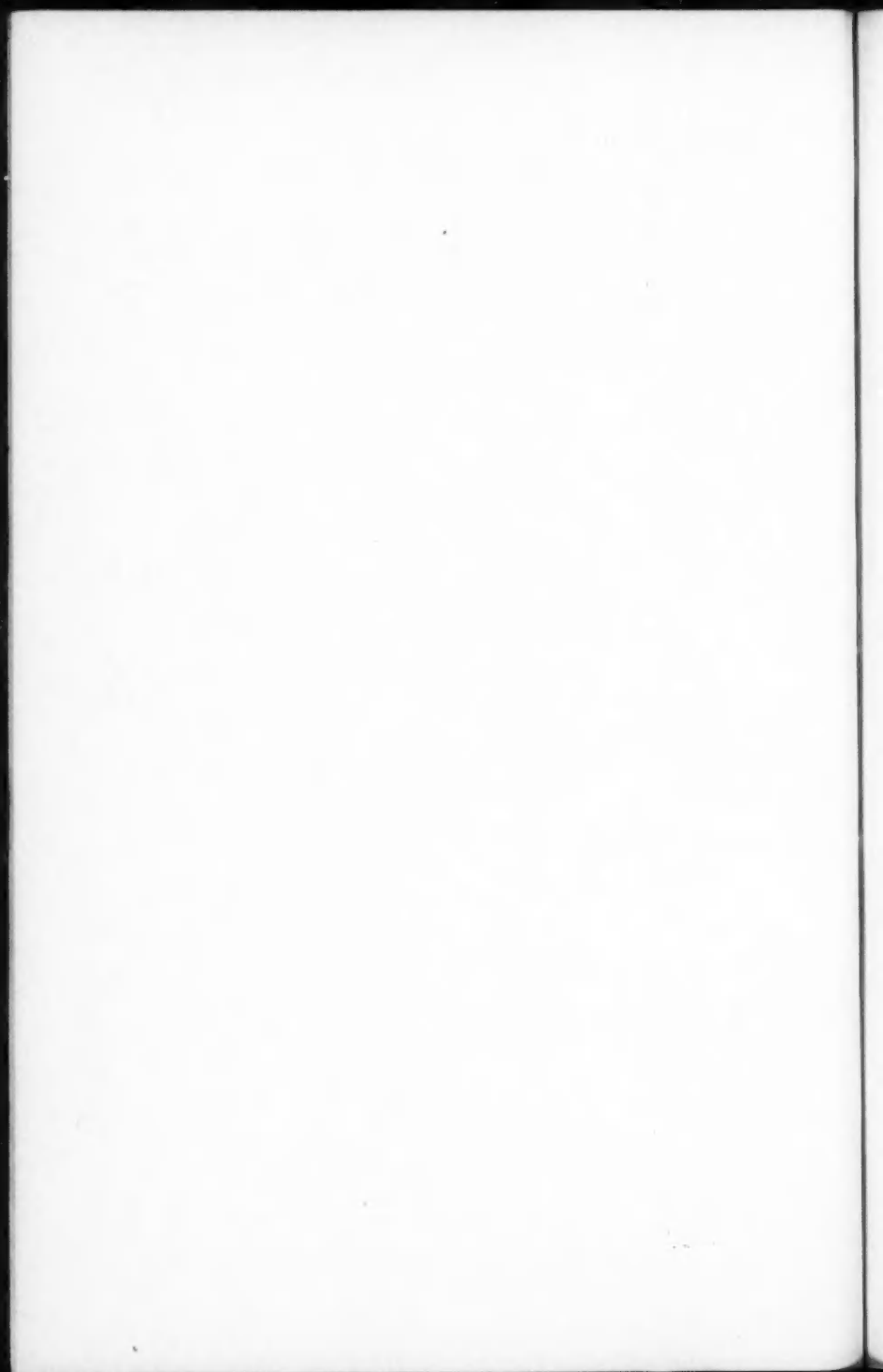
Probably well over three-fourths of the books enumerated in this study are out of print, although most of them can be had at a moderate price by advertising through a local book dealer. The bibliographies are, of course, not complete, for additional volumes are constantly appearing in the most unexpected places, and no matter how thorough the search it is never entirely finished.

The writer is indebted to the editors of *Railroad Magazine*, *The Eyrie* and *The Enthusiast* for permission to reprint portions of his own articles; to Mrs. Francis Lynde, Mr. Thomas Clark Spearman, Messrs. George M. Crowson and T. T. Keliher of the Illinois Central System, Mr. W. S. Thompson of the Canadian National Railways, Mr. Kenneth McCormick of Doubleday, Doran & Company and Mr. D. C. McGraw of the McGraw-Hill Publishing Company for photographs and other assistance rendered in preparing biographical sketches of railroad authors, as well as to the writers themselves who have kindly sent autobiographical sketches; to Mr. Keyes Porter, Miss Elizabeth O. Cullen of the Bureau of Railway Economics, Mr. Frank Tilton of the Statistical Bureau—Western Lines, and Dr. John S. Worley of the Transportation Library, University of Michigan, for much valuable aid in making the bibliographies; to Mr. Fontaine Fox for the privilege of reproducing one of his cartoons, Mr. Arthur H. Chamberlain, Editor of *The Overland Monthly* for the use of the insignia of that magazine on the cover, and to Arthur Mann Barnes, Jr. for assistance tendered in making the maps. In writing the introductory chapter special thanks must go to Mr. Charles Ingalls for his suggestions, and to Rev. Franz G. Borbe, and Dr. Merritt C. Batchelder, of the American University, for reading and preparing the manuscript for publication. Finally the author is grateful to Mr. Charles E. Fisher, President of the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society, whose cooperation and unflagging interest have made this book possible.

At some future date it is hoped this work can be enlarged and more space given to the railroad authors and their contribution to literature. The writer would appreciate getting the names of additional titles of books in the English language, together with detailed information in the form given in the appended bibliographies, if possible. Letters may be addressed: care of the Railway and Locomotive Historical Society, Inc., Baker Library, Harvard Business School, Boston, Massachusetts.

Washington, D. C.  
May 7, 1939.

F. P. D., Jr.



## CHAPTER I

### Railroading Into Literature

Literature, no matter when, where or how it is written, is in the last analysis, a mirror of life. Life we may say is a fusion of a variety of peoples put, as it were, into a giant melting pot in which each nation contributes its quota, be it large or small, to enrich the vari-colored mosaic of the ever changing history of man. One can, however, divide various types of letters at will; yet any attempt at segregation in an absolute sense is futile. In one respect this little study of the railroad in American literature is a narrow, restricted work, but like the apex of the meanest branch line water tank it should, it is hoped, include a relatively wide and tapering superstructure before a flowing forth of generalizations can ensue. For this reason more than passing mention is made of foreign authors, especially those of Great Britain, in order to get a better understanding of our own literature.

Observe, if you will, a section-gang in any part of North America. Better still, get down from a stream-lined flyer in one section of the continent; alight from a wheezy local in another; or disembark as a fitful mixed train comes to a jolting halt in some out-of-the-way locality which novelists delight in calling God's country. Although the United States is generally conceded to be a heterogeneous nation, one will find this especially true of its track men. One may note swarthy Italians, turbulent Irish and happy, care-free Negroes on the Pennsylvania; some highly intelligent Japanese and industrious Chinese on the Southern Pacific; a group of plodding Swedes on the Soo; and not a few singing Bohemians on the Rock Island. But why go on, for the picturesque variations are everywhere apparent from a mammoth transcontinental to the humblest short-line. And these men, this assortment of races and tongues, actually built the roads which blanket our continent. To ignore such a colorful patchwork of nationalities, so fundamental to America's progress, is to brush aside many of the basic forces making up our literature.

Nor must one forget the wide swath the railroad has made in revolutionizing social life all over the world. Too often this discussion is limited to historical or economic treatises, which while of inestimable value in their scope, are only part of the picture. A play is read for enjoyment, but for atmosphere and spirit there is nothing which can take the place of its on-the-stage performance. Similarly, a text book is associated with sheer knowledge and bald facts, whereas fiction is in a measure the dramatization of facts so as to make them more palatable to the average reader. The novel, in other words, is an interpretation and humanization of actual events, sometimes profound, more often superficial, in terms of flesh and blood experiences. Barring a few supernatural stories, all fiction is a synthesis of tangible events and the success of an author can be attributed, among other things, to his eclecticism. But it may be argued that characters are often figments

of the writer's imagination—very well, is not the imagination after all, a composition, with discriminate or indiscriminate shuffling, of the men on the street, or in this study on the railroad?

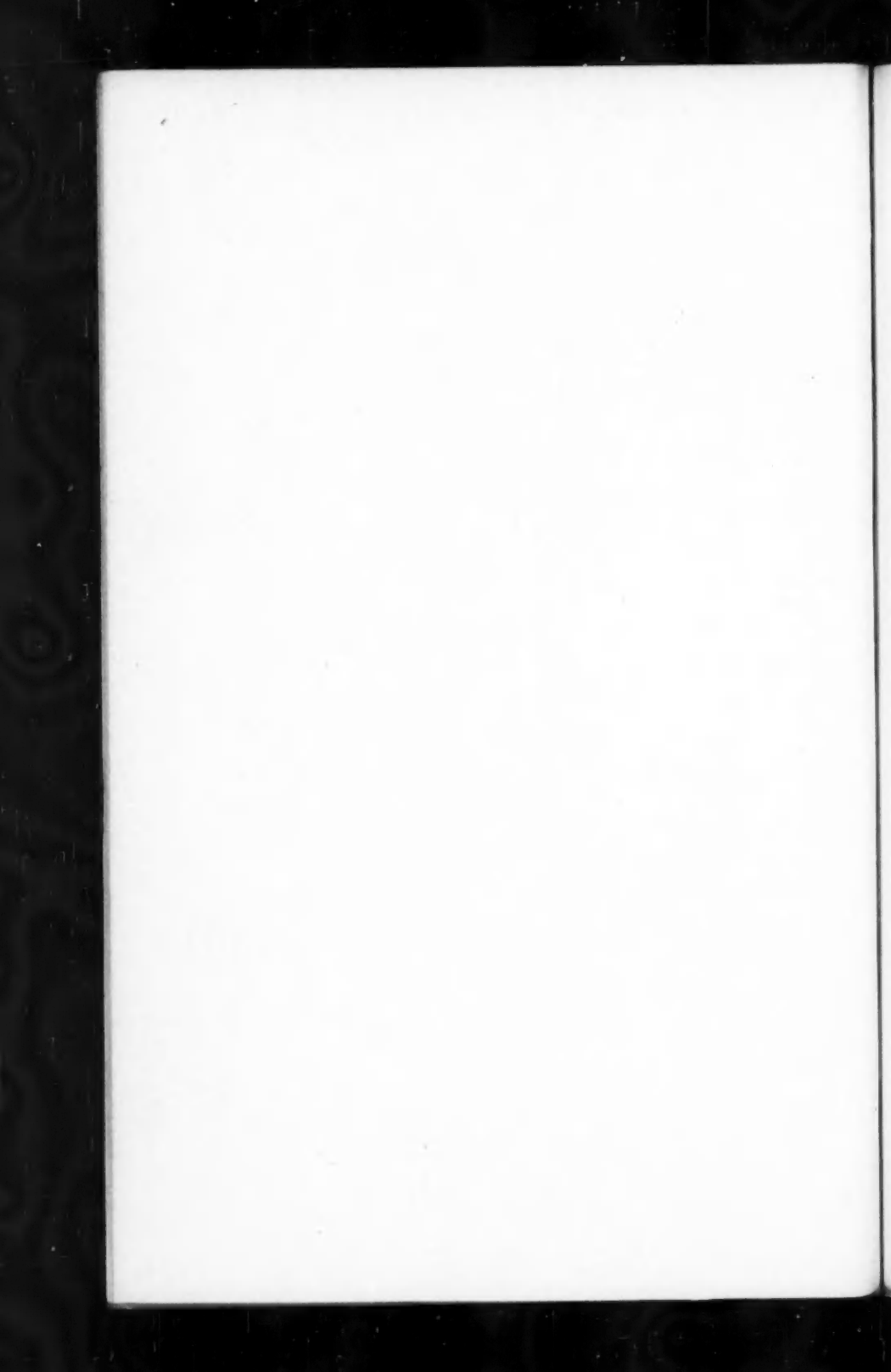
In railroad literature there is opened for our eyes all the multi-shades, vistas and little glimpses of life that come to us from the train window. Passing scenes that for a moment startle us with their natural beauty, fleeting but vivid impressions of life have become a part of us and are remembered long after. We recall the stern New England country-side mellowed for a moment by that magic artist, autumn, who fires the rolling woodlands and brings the harvest. Or we breathe deeply the warm, rich moisture of the Mississippi Valley. We hear the deep full voice of the Southland—our senses are quickened. Then coming suddenly from a mountain gorge we behold the power, the awful majesty of the Rockies. "Yes," we say, "this is the West, the frontier; here is romance." Or we journey into the north country where endless virgin forests run by us. The blast from the whistle hangs like a living note in the sub zero atmosphere. We stop at a station bearing a French name and hear the hearty, boisterous shouts of lumberjacks as they deftly roll logs onto flat cars. Pike poles and cant dogs bite deeply into hemlock and spruce; they work furiously.

But just as the novels and stories of the railroad are not confined to one locale, so its influences on other types of literature are many and varied. Certainly the high iron is not without romance, and wherever you have romance you will find song, either implied or rendered with exuberance. In railroading this is given outright with no restraint, for is it not an expression of the heart, a vivacious overflow of emotions which demands release? From it we get a fleeting glimpse of the great American Mural—a palimpsest of life yesterday and today as it emerges with strong traces of the past being moulded by the forces of the present. We know that the old time railroader was a creature of emotions—one who was essentially a child of nature, outspoken, violent and boisterous, and yet at times compassionate and tender. We see him as he stood by the right of way and felt the cool breath of freedom touch his forehead, in his veins running the strange fluids of life, his mind filled with the unheard melodies of the universe and his heart full. He sang.

In some respects the poetry of the railroad is the very antithesis of song, for in place of crudeness it has polish, and in lieu of spontaneous emotional outbursts, one finds restrained and carefully worded lines. Yet it is emotion—definite emotion corralled and toned down by a trained intellect. While all verse dealing with this industry cannot be classed as poetry, practically the whole of it expresses the full-lived atmosphere of the rail. Moreover, a natural rhyme and a humble rhythm are found in railway poetry which are genuine and quite welcome in this day of sophisticated verse.

Without going into the other divisions of letters in which the railroad has a part, be it large or small, we must not overlook the fact that the sum total of these literary fragments, when woven together, is of the utmost significance in giving a really adequate cross section of life dur-

ing the last century. Some phases of literature, such as railroad biographies, evince a strong trunk line atmosphere, like a community situated at an important division point; others, in the essay and travel category, may have their origin on the main line but extend to the most desolate railhead and beyond; and a few, namely the plays of the Iron Horse, are like folk who live in a one-train-a-day village, where the whistle of the early morning local means adventure and escape—a highly romanticized view of the industry so essential to the stage and screen. But whether romance or realism or a happy combination of the two, it is hoped that the reader will see the railroad coursing through literature in its broad social aspects as a vital and living part of the American Scene.





## CHAPTER II

### American Fiction

Railroad fiction in this country, at least that of the better type, is considerably more than a good yarn or story—it is an interpretation of a sector of American life. Then, too, most of the characters found in novels in this category have definitely American traits. The one potent factor dominating such literature is most certainly that of the frontier. All the loyalty, bravery and self-reliance of the pioneer are found in a good railroad yarn. One would quite naturally expect a large portion of these stories to have their setting in the West. A careful survey shows this to be true, especially so in the best novels. Moreover, stress is laid on characterization rather than plot, setting, or style. A railroad novel is essentially one of action, adventure, and achievement with the love element of only secondary importance, if present at all. Indeed, women in short stories pertaining to the railroad are almost as scarce as they were on the frontier. Today railroading is more or less a science; yesterday it was an adventure and an exceedingly dangerous one at that. It is, however, with the latter that our novelist is chiefly concerned.

Just when the first American railroad story was written is difficult, almost impossible, to say. Arbitrarily taking the year 1830 as the beginning, when railroads were starting in this country, one may divide this literature into four periods: (1) 1830 to 1890, the era of Inception and Growth; (2) 1890 to 1910, the Golden Age; (3) 1910 to 1930, the period of Decline; and (4) from 1930 to the present day, a partial Renaissance in railroad fiction.

During the first few years there were hardly any stories of this nature either in periodicals or books. But as the new mode of transportation became recognized authors slowly turned their pens to recounting tales of its development and expansion. By 1890 railroad yarns had appeared rather plentifully, especially in magazines.

The second period (1890-1910) may be termed the Golden Age of railroad literature as during this time the Iron Horse achieved its greatest popularity. A locomotive engineer was then frequently looked upon with the same awe and respect as an airplane pilot today. The train and trolley became, for all practical purposes, the only mode of travel, although the automobile had, toward the end of the period, made slight inroads in rail traffic. But even to the end of the era the branch line passenger train was still a picturesque and highly important American institution. People not only rode by rail; they avidly read stories in connection with it. Indeed, these years caused the appearance of a small group of writers whose main theme was railroading. In this school of fiction writers, Frank H. Spearman, Cy Warman, Francis Lynde, and Frank L. Packard may be mentioned as the most popular. Three others, not so prolific, yet none the less authors who had a thorough knowledge of the carriers, were John A. Hill, Herbert E. Hamblen and Alvah Milton Kerr. More railroad stories were written

in this era than in any other period before or since. Many of these writers first sold their stories to magazines only to have them reprinted in book form several years later.

The third period (1910-1930) was one of marked decline. Interest in this type of literature gradually decreased until the coming of the World War when all thoughts turned to the immediate problems confronting the nation. This conflict having terminated, the motor vehicle and airplane had largely usurped the popularity of the railroad. There was, however, one very capable short story writer, A. W. Somerville, who came to the fore in the post bellum decade.

The final period (1930 to date) has witnessed a slight upturn in nearly all types of railroad literature. Although the first part of the decade may have shown a decrease in novels because of the depression, the actual periodical output probably increased. The reappearance of the old *Railroad Man's Magazine* (now *Railroad Magazine*) on December 1929, opened a new field for authors. Gradually through the efforts of this publication together with numerous railroad clubs and the cooperation of the carriers, new interest in rail transportation developed. Thanks to the "railfan" this type of fiction is in the process of being reborn. Several competent authors are writing on the subject under discussion.

Of the Railroad School certainly no author received greater popularity, and justly so, than Frank Hamilton Spearman. Born in Buffalo, New York, September 6, 1859, he received his education in the public schools and Lawrence University in Appleton, Wisconsin. Although Spearman aspired to become a doctor ill health forced him to pursue some other line.<sup>1</sup> He became a broker at eighteen, traveling salesman at twenty, bank cashier at twenty-seven and bank president at twenty-nine. A man of remarkable versatility, he mastered whatever he undertook. By 1895 Spearman devoted most of his time to writing railroad stories and articles. With the publication of *Held for Orders* in 1901, his fame as a railroad author was established. This book, a collection of short stories, is now regarded as a classic in the field. But *Whispering Smith* published five years later far surpassed it in popularity and set an all-time record in the sale of a railroad novel. Its phenomenal success did not end here, for the story was made into a motion picture in 1915, and again in 1926, at which time it starred H. B. Warner. Among Spearman's other railroad tales appearing in the photoplays were "The Love Special" (1919) from *The Daughter of a Magnate* featuring Wallace Reid, "The Runaway Express" (1926) from *The Nerve of Foley*, and "The Yellow Mail" (1927) from *Held for Orders*.

Spearman's novels and short stories laid particular stress on the nerve, loyalty and ingenuity of the American railroader. He wrote well, showing a thorough knowledge of his subject and a keen insight into human nature. Spearman was perhaps the most polished writer of the Railroad School. Though his plots are good and his style excellent, he really excels in portraying the honest, hard-boiled, two-fisted trainman of the past. Not a railroader himself, he, however, liked the men

<sup>1</sup> *Book Buyer*, Vol. XXV, No. 4, (November 1902), p. 296.

out on the line.<sup>2</sup> Practically every one of his characters is an absolute prototype of his friends on the road. His son Thomas Clark Spearman in the following letter tells how he collected material.

He was never employed by a railroad. His contact with them was as a banker in western Nebraska, at McCook, a division point on the Burlington. Railroad men were among the customers of the bank. From daily contact he picked up the color and incidents suggesting his later work in the fictional and fact narratives of the rail.

The Strategy of Great Railroads, a study of the promotion and building of some of the principal systems and a text book at one time at Yale—perhaps now—grew out of personal visits with the leading rail executives at that time.

Whispering Smith, a novel with a rail background and a best seller, was written after a visit of two weeks to Cheyenne, Wyoming, where Father met the division heads, cattlemen, and local authorities—in particular, Joe La Fors, United States Deputy Marshal—a gun handler never equalled in that country—and Tim Keliher, then Special Agent of the Union Pacific at Cheyenne.

Father was remarkably quick at picking up authentic data and retaining it.

And from Timothy T. Keliher, now chief special agent of the Illinois Central, comes this fascinating letter:

I first met Mr. Frank H. Spearman in Cheyenne, Wyoming the latter part of 1905. He had come to Cheyenne looking for material for a new novel, and was directed to me. I was at that time special agent in charge of the Wyoming Division of the Union Pacific Railroad Company, with headquarters in Cheyenne and as such had charge of the famous Union Pacific bandit posse, organized for and used in the prevention of passenger and express train hold ups and other depredations that had become altogether too prevalent in that section of the country just prior to that time.

Mr. Spearman was first of all a cultured gentleman in all that the words imply—a very unusual man, a medium sized, mild mannered man, rather slender, wore a Vandyke beard, keen but friendly eyes, a soft pleasing voice, a refined, intellectual face, was very temperate in all his tastes and habits—a friendly, pleasing personality with the faculty of making friends and putting them at their ease. A splendid listener, with the extraordinary ability of asking just the right questions to bring out everything one knew about the subject matter.

I used to call him "the human sponge," because he could listen for hours at a time to one and never make a note. I was with him a great deal, visited at his home for a week at a time. I never did see him make a single note while listening to the narrative of those he was interviewing, but he could go home to his study and write or dictate all he had heard, word for word.

He could go out into a railroad yard or a railroad shop plant and absorb the atmosphere of the place and the talk and the spirit of the men and their objectives. The same applied when he met cowboys, ranchers, sheriffs and other law enforcement officers—just a few polite and nicely phrased questions and they told him all they knew and some things their grandfathers knew—and that retentive human sponge never forgot a word they said, or the scene described by them. That was the secret of his success in writing railroad and Western stories—"Whispering Smith", "Nan of Music Mountain", "Laramie Holds the Range" are Western classics that will live for generations in American literature as fine examples of clean, wholesome and inspired writings. In writing them, he captured the Spirit of the West. I think his "Daughter of the Magnate" was his best railroad story; all his short railroad stories were good.

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<sup>2</sup> Titus, William A., *Wisconsin Writers*, Chicago, Illinois, 1930, p. 60.

During his long career Spearman received many honors. Among them were the degrees of Doctor of Literature from Notre Dame, Santa Clara, and Loyola Universities. In 1935 he was awarded the Laetare Medal from Notre Dame as the most outstanding Catholic author of the year.<sup>3</sup> He died in Los Angeles on December 29, 1937.

It was only by a fluke that Cy Warman became a writer. True, he had been dabbling in verse for several years and he even wrote a little book called *Mountain Melodies* which sold by the thousands on the Denver & Rio Grande trains. But he was not, strictly speaking, a writer, i.e., not until after he had read a railroad story in *McClure's Magazine* by a man who obviously did not know his subject. Thereupon Warman hastily wrote to the editor of *McClure's* offering to ride a thousand miles on a locomotive and give his story to them if it was not the "best ever". The article "A Thousand Mile Ride on the Engine of the Swiftest Train in the World" (*McClure's Magazine*, January, 1894) met with instant success. From that time on Warman continued writing.

Cy Warman was born near Greenup, Illinois, on June 22, 1855, but spent most of his life in the West. For many years he was a locomotive fireman and engineer on the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad, now the Denver & Rio Grande Western. In 1888 he became editor of a semi-monthly paper, *Western Railway*. Two years later he edited the *Chronicle*, a newspaper in the mining town of Creede, Colorado. Meanwhile Warman started writing bits of verse and his poem entitled "The Canyon of the Grand" won a prize. On September 4, 1892, Charles A. Dana printed some of his verse in the *New York Sun*, calling him "The Poet of the Rockies." Later "Sweet Marie," a poem by Warman was put to music by Raymond Moore and in six months time over a million copies of this song were sold. Today the once popular air is all but forgotten, though his stories and novels are treasured by railroad students in all parts of the country.

Many of Warman's stories, while generally classed as fiction, are in reality, true incidents of the rail. Despite the fact that his works do not have quite the literary finish of Spearman, Warman's sincerity and simplicity give them a charm all of their own. His books deal almost entirely with the romance and adventure of frontier railroading. Like many of the authors in the Railroad School, Warman is essentially a writer of short stories. He has, however, written two novels entitled *The White Mail* and *Snow on the Headlight* besides a history called *The Story of the Railroad* and a volume of verse entitled *Songs of Cy Warman*. Among his best known books of short yarns are *Tales of an Engineer*, *The Express Messenger*, *The Last Spike*, and *Short Rails*. Were it not for the fact that he dashed off, presumably in one of his weaker moments, a volume of Indian tales by the name of *Weiga of Temagami* with not one mention of the Iron Horse, he might be called America's first and only all-railroad writer of any importance.

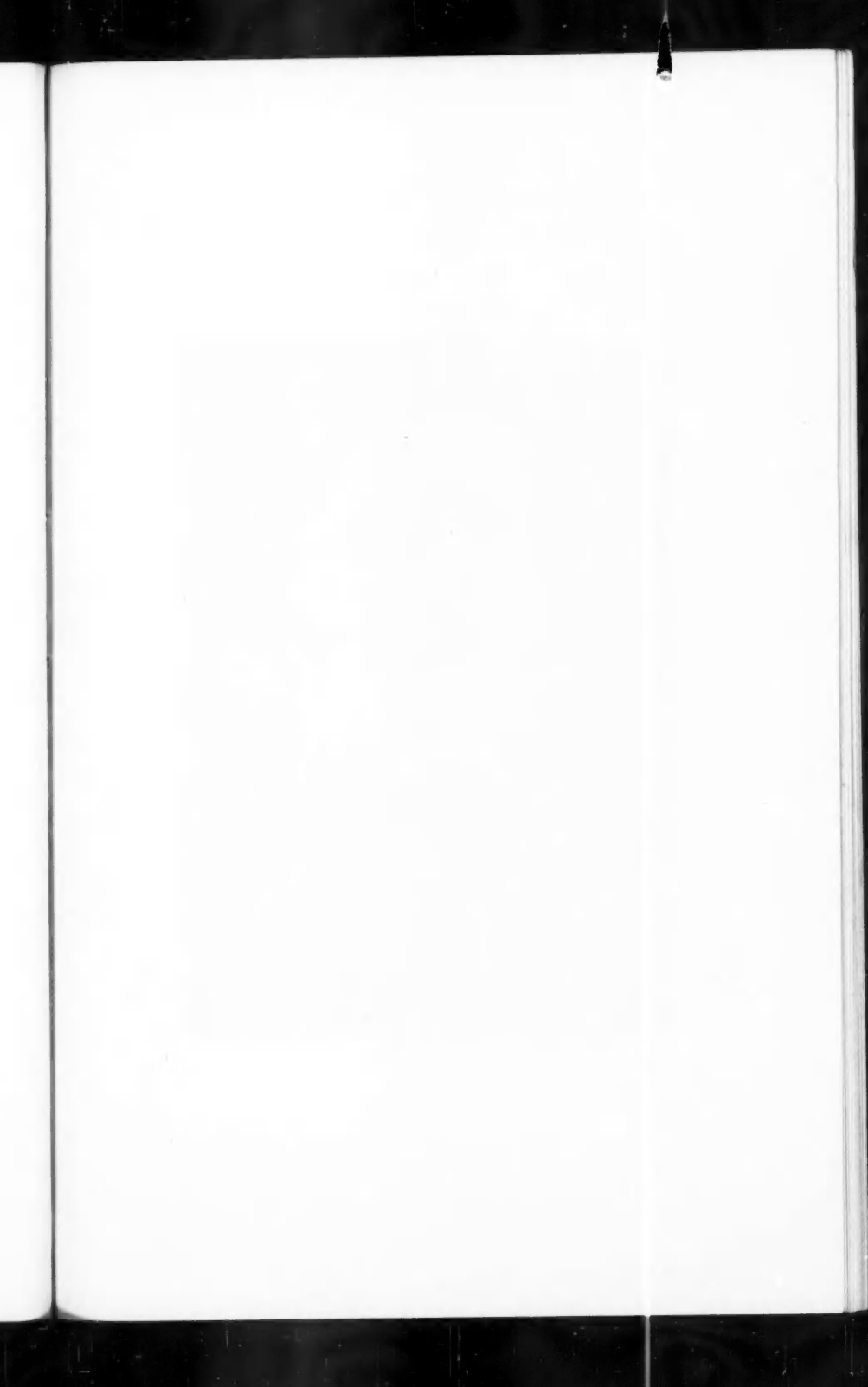
Up to the time of his death he held the trustworthy position of confidential assistant to Edson J. Chamberlin, president of the Grand

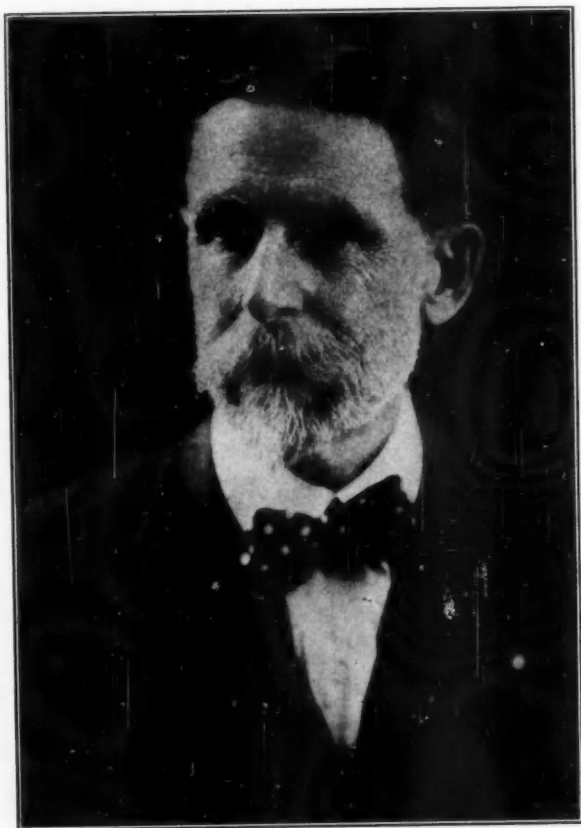
<sup>3</sup> "Award to Frank H. Spearman," *Catholic World*, Vol. CXLI, No. 542, (May 1935), p. 237.



CY WARMAN







FRANCIS LYNDE



Trunk, the Grand Trunk Pacific, and Central Vermont Railways.<sup>4</sup> And today the Canadian National folk point with pride to the town of Warman situated about fifteen miles northeast of Saskatoon in the western part of the Dominion. The hamlet, located on the Maple Leaf System, has a population of about two hundred citizens, a school, and several stores, but above all it is an important railroad junction. Indeed, a more fitting monument could hardly be imagined, much less desired, for the famous author. Cy Warman died on April 7, 1914.

Unlike most railroad authors, Francis Lynde preferred the novel to the short story as a vehicle for his writings. A New Yorker, like Spearman, he was born in Lewistown, November 12, 1856. On reaching his fifteenth year he quit school to work in a cotton mill at Suncook, New Hampshire. At the age of 21 he became master mechanic of the Southern Pacific shops at Tulare, California. Subsequently Lynde held executive positions on the Union Pacific as chief clerk to the general-passenger agent and traveling passenger agent with headquarters in New Orleans.

While in the Crescent City he met James Maurice Thompson, author of *Hoosier Mosaics*; *Alice of Old Vincennes*, etc., and divulged his childhood ambition to become a writer. Encouraged by Thompson, Lynde sold his first article—an account of the process of manufacturing artificial ice—to *Youth's Companion*.

In 1893 he discontinued railroading to devote his entire time to writing. All in all he produced some thirty-five novels, about half of which deal wholly or partially with railroads. Perhaps his most popular book in this category is *The Wreckers* completed in 1919. Here is an account of how a newly appointed general manager saved a railroad after it had been virtually gutted by a clique of Wall Street speculators. Some of Lynde's other well known works include *The Fight on the Standing Stone*, *Empire Builders*, *Scientific Sprague*, *The Taming of the Red Butte* Western and *Young Blood*. Lynde, in contrast with many of the other railroad novelists, wrote from the viewpoint of an executive rather than the train-crew. His problems were those of construction, competition and management which by no means preclude right of way fights, and innumerable clashes of rival interests. There is action aplenty, but the outcome and its bearing upon the larger issue are more important than a closely analyzed character sketch of trainmen in a relatively petty mishap, however important it may be to the parties involved.

Mr. Lynde was presented with the honorary degree of Doctor of Literature from the University of the South. He died in his home on Lookout Mountain near Chattanooga, May 16, 1930.

The last one of the "big four" writers of the railroad group is Frank Lucius Packard. Like most of the men in this group he worked for a railroad—the Canadian Pacific—at the Carleton Junction (Ontario) shops. Better known as a writer of short stories, Packard may, however, be credited with a full length detective story on railroading

<sup>4</sup> MacKay, Robert, "The Passing of Cy Warman." *Railroad Man's Magazine*, Vol. XXIV, No. 2, (June 1914), p. 383.

entitled *The Wire Devils*. The reader will find a biographical sketch of him in the chapter dealing with the short story.

Of the lesser known, yet equally interesting, authors in the Railroad School is John Alexander Hill. Although a Vermonter, born near Bennington on February 22, 1858, he was educated in the State of Wisconsin. At fourteen he went to work in a printing press. Having later turned to railroading, he occupied the position of locomotive engineer for a period of eight years. Like Warman he eventually entered the newspaper field and in 1885 founded and edited the *Pueblo, Colorado Daily Press*. Again, like Warman, he edited a railroad publication—*Locomotive Engineering*. Soon he filled the offices of president and treasurer of the Hill Publishing Company, the forerunner of the now famous McGraw-Hill Publishing Company. His success as an editor, according to a letter to Elbert Hubbard, in his own words must be attributed to "the fact that I didn't know what their blooming traditions were and cared a darn sight less."<sup>5</sup>

In the pages of *Locomotive Engineering* under the pen name of John Alexander, he wrote homely little sketches of advice for engineers in the guise of fiction. These preachments were subsequently put in book form under the title of *Jim Skeever's Object Lessons*. His next work—*Stories of the Railroad*—met with favor by railroad men and the general public alike. Mr. Hill's only other volume was called *Progressive Examinations for Locomotive Engineers and Firemen* and was regarded as a standard textbook for men on both sides of the cab in its day. He died on January 24, 1916.

Of the two remaining authors Herbert E. Hamblen will long be remembered for his exquisite biography of an old time railroader. This yarn, filled with the gusto and daring so inextricably mixed in the character of the trainmen of yesteryear, is called *The General Manager's Story*. A more detailed sketch of Hamblen will be found in the chapter on biography. Suffice it to say he was a railroader of the old school.

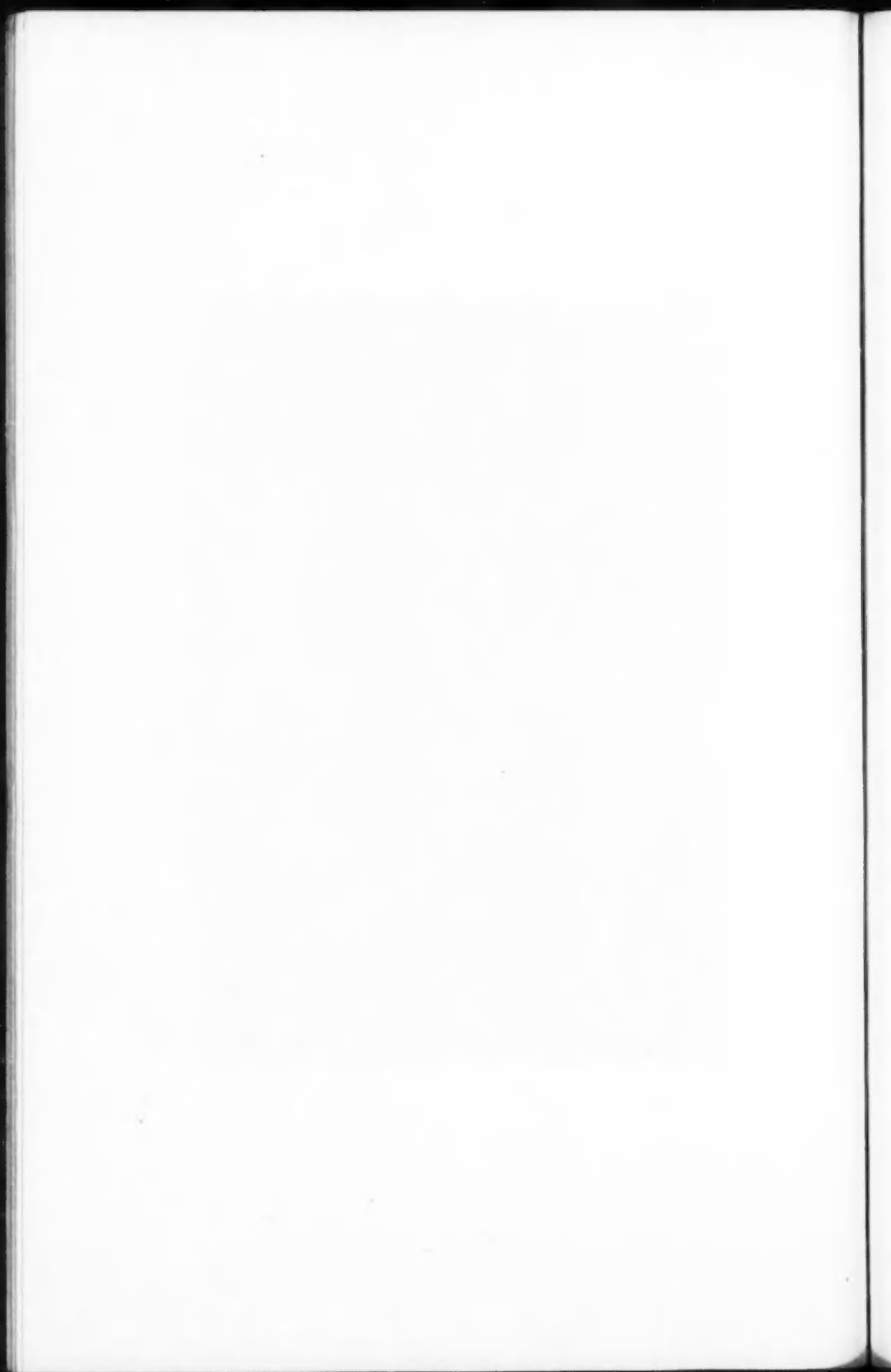
Alvah Milton Kerr, the last of the septet, was for many years a train dispatcher on the Rock Island. Since he wrote only short stories space has been given for a biographical account of him in the next chapter.

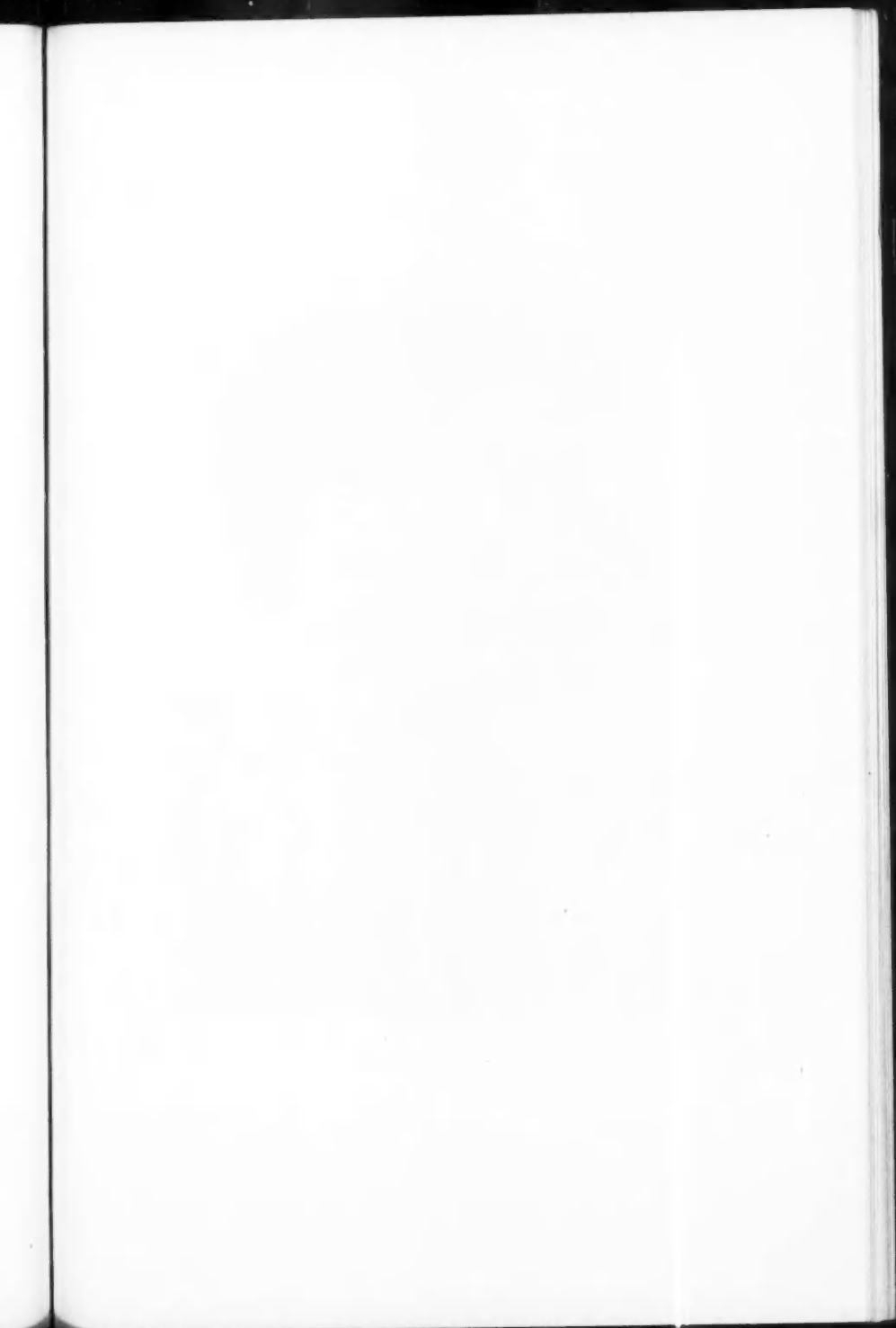
Reviewing the authors in the group I may call attention to one thing especially noteworthy, namely, that with the exception of Spearman they all had railroad experience. Then, too, most of them wrote about "the fellows out on the line" in contrast with the executive or administrator. After all it is the trainmen who exemplify the romance and glamor of railroading. But even more important, these authors get the feel of the road into their stories. In short they *know* railroading. As a matter of fact there is only one author (apart from Spearman) who wrote a superb railroad short story and yet never pulled a throttle or twisted a brake wheel. He is Rudyard Kipling whose production was the ".007." Taken as a whole railroad men seldom excel in writing; and conversely, writers are, often as not, gloriously ignorant of the fine points of railroading. There are some exceptions, to be sure, but

<sup>5</sup> Some of the Writings of John A. Hill, (published by his friends), p. 115.



JOHN ALEXANDER HILL







(Courtesy Little, Brown & Co.)

WILLIAM WISTER HAINES

anyone reading several hundred railroad stories finds this quite generally to be true. Only by turning to the Railroad School do we get a nice blending of rail life and letters.

It is natural to expect of changing conditions and modern improvements to bring forth youthful talent to give a fresh impetus and new perspective to an old theme. When the Pennsylvania Railroad started electrification on a grand scale one Iowan reasoned there was more than an academic relationship between car loadings and kilowatt hours, so he got a job on the P. R. R., ergo the Pennsy inadvertently gave the literary world William Wister Haines, and Haines gave America its only saga of a railroad linesman. Once in the pages of *High Tension* the reader is quickly aware of a twentieth century picture of an up-to-date trunk line with nothing of the past but seniority and only little of that. The wistful look-back-to-glory vein usually associated with books on the high iron is totally absent in this novel.

Mr. Haines was born in Des Moines, September 17, 1908, and lived in Iowa until his eighteenth year. He attended private schools and graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1931. Although he has worked at a number of trades, line work is his forte. Besides stringing wires on the Pennsylvania, he has been employed as a linesman for power and light, mining and construction companies.

Mr. Haines sold his first short story to the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1934, and has since had several other stories accepted in the same publication. His first novel *Slim* recounts the adventures of a linesman on power projects and railroad electrification.

Of the standard American authors few have written entire novels about railroads. But in this limited scope fall two of the nation's literary figures: the one, Winston Churchill with his inimitable New England setting and rural fire-side atmosphere; and the other, Frank Norris who moved the fertile San Joaquin valley of California several hundred miles northeast of its geographical location and incidentally placed it securely in the pale of American letters.

In both *Coniston* and *Mr. Crewe's Career*, Winston Churchill weaves a story around the railroad's dominance in political matters, a situation which existed not only in New Hampshire but in many other localities. *Mr. Crewe's Career* deals particularly with the author's experience in running for the governor of the "Granite State" and the influence of the Boston and Maine Railroad in the house and senate. Frank Norris, on the other hand, in *The Octopus* describes the Southern Pacific's alleged monopoly in California and especially the struggle between the wheat growers and the railroad in the San Joaquin Valley. Incidentally the same historic valley is the theme of May Merriam Miller's recent novel *First the Blade*. Unlike Norris's work Miller's is more chronological in nature, tracing the development from the early pioneers to after the coming of the railroad. It should be noted, however, that these books were written about conditions which existed some forty or fifty years ago, and should not in any wise be construed as being applicable today. Happily the carriers are now among the finest types of corporation managements in the modern business world.

Was it not the late Owen Wister who called the *Railway Guide* "the most interesting book in America?" At any rate, this Philadelphia lawyer gives an admirable description of western railroad travel in *The Virginian* and *Lin McLean*, although they are in no way confined to the carriers. But if Wister made the statement concerning the "station agent's Bible," the Q. E. D. was left to Christopher Morley who, being the son of a mathematician, furnished the proof. Indeed, its fascination is definitely corralled in his chapter on "The Railway Guide" in *Human Being*, and anyone even mildly interested in time-tables will be delighted in reading it.

We have seen the powerful influence of the frontier on the so called Railroad School, and yet it is not restricted to that group. From time to time other authors became interested in early western railroading, particularly in the building of the Union Pacific. In this category is Zane Grey's *The U. P. Trail*, Ernest Haycox's *Trouble Shooter*, Edwin C. Hill's *The Iron Horse* and Sarah Pratt Carr's *The Iron Way*. But perhaps the only novel of a northern "transcontinental" apart from biographical-fiction is *Railroad West* by Cornelia Meigs, which is laid around the building of the Northern Pacific. To this may be added *The 17* by Edwin C. Washburn, a story of a locomotive in pioneer railroad construction in the Northwest. And in the Southwest an interesting picture of railroad construction can be had in Samuel Merwin's *The Road-Builders*. Although, historically, the frontier disappeared in 1890, it was only beginning to appear in railroad fiction.

Concerning the new frontiers, namely Alaska and Canada several readable novels have been written. Rex Beach's *The Iron Trail* and Douglas Grant's *The Single Track* both deal with railroad building in Alaska. The newly constructed Hudson Bay Railway in Canada is the basis for Courtney Ryley Cooper's *End of Steel*. Then too, there is Charles E. Seroggins' *Tycoon* with its setting in Central America.

The writer of fiction has the advantage over the biographer insofar as he can dramatize the leading characters at will. Indeed, several biographical novels have been woven around the lives of prominent railroad executives with more than a little success. For example, James J. Hill plays a prominent role in Ramsey Benson's *Hill Country* and Oscar M. Sullivan's *The Empire-Builder*. Harriman, too, is made the hero of Garet Garrett's *The Driver* in the person of Henry M. Galt. On the other hand, Arthur Stringer's super-aggressive executive in his *Power* is, it would seem, of a fictitious nature.

One of the best railroad settings in recent years is to be found in a detective story called *Sleepers East*. The author, an ex "rail," gives a realistic, straight-from-the-shoulder description of a murder committed aboard a speeding express. From the veteran engineer in the cab bucking a blizzard, to the worried conductor and cynical detective in the coaches, the story rings true to life on the iron road. Moreover, the plot is well executed, and the solution of the crime is logical and satisfying. The writer, Frederick Nebel, has a faculty for describing railroad scenes and snow storms which he unites in the form of a snow-bound train. Another first rate mystery story is Frank L. Packard's



*The Wire Devils*, concerning railroad telegraphy. And Rodger Denbie's *Death on the Limited* gives a swift moving account of crime and detection aboard a crack Boston-Washington Express on the Pennsylvania.

Despite the importance of the street railways a decade or two ago, fiction on this public utility is scarce. Going back to the days of animal traction, a colorful portrayal of a genial mule-car driver in a little South Carolina town, is given in Marie Conway Oemler's *Johnny Reb*. Then continuing to cable operation *The Financier* and *The Titan*, two long novels by Theodore Dreiser, give the chequered story of Charles T. Yerkes, the notorious Philadelphia-Chicago-London traction magnate. But the only novel of the trolley (barring a paper-bound volume) is Edward Hungerford's *Little Corky*. On the other hand, an uncommonly good detective story, opening with a murder on a Manhattan street car, is *The Tragedy of X* by Barnaby Ross.

To this list may be added a miscellaneous assortment of novels, written about a variety of localities, incidents, and characters in American life. For example, Joseph C. Lincoln has chosen the quaint sea-village atmosphere of Cape Cod for the locale of *The Depot Master*. Gerald Johnson, on the other hand, finds enchantment in the Southern Railway in North Carolina. Regardless of the changes brought about by time, war, and scrambled economic conditions and despite a chaotic, dis-organized world—*Number Thirty-Six* is still the same reliable train, the one remaining institution in a small southern town essentially unaltered. Then in the Southwest there is Edwin M. Lanham's *The Wind Blew West*. Other novels stressing the American scene in which the railroad forms an important part are *The Manager of the B & A*, by Vaughan Kester, *The Darlings* by Elmore Elliott Peake, *Tommy of the Voices* by Reynolds Knight, *Track's End* by Hayden Carruth, and *The Magic Midland* by Harold Waldo. The latter story depicts something of the glory, virility and devil-may-care attitude of trainmen as seen and worshipped by the boys of the neighborhood. *The Magic Midland* is that impressionistic age between youth and manhood, when education was subordinate to adventure, and learning only vaguely associated with living. It might be said that the railroad is to Harold Waldo what the Mississippi was to Mark Twain in his boyhood days.

Other novels describing the exploits of railroaders include Merwin Webster's *The Short Line War* and Robert Fulkerson Hoffman's *Mark Enderby, Engineer*. The former is based on the struggle for control of the Albany and Susquehanna Railway by Gould and his Erie associates in the late sixties, although the settings are moved to the West; the latter delineates life on the iron road in a manner that would do credit to many of the authors of the Railroad School. One strongly suspects that Hoffman was a trainman himself, for his stories have all the earmarks of a man who has never been far from the right of way.

This chapter would not be complete without a word about the late Thomas Wolfe. Although Wolfe had never seen duty on the railroad he was an inveterate train rider, and had the uncanny faculty for describing his trips in detail. This is illustrated in all his works, but nowhere is it more forcefully brought out than in *Of Time and the*

*River*. To be sure, they are only incidents, often petty incidents, yet they loomed big in the eyes of Wolfe and he did not hesitate to make this plain to the reader. While yet on the subject of current novels, I may mention Paul Horgan's *Main Line West* as another popular non-railroad book which nevertheless has some excellent word pictures of day coach travel.

To summarize, we can say the railroad at one time played a relatively important part in American fiction. Then too, certain authors became specialists in writing stories about this industry during the latter part of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. They in turn were influenced by the spirit and characteristics of the frontier a decade or two before—a force which is still apparent in the railway fiction of today. Yet the dominance of the Iron Horse in novels passed with the era of expansion and construction until it has become comparatively insignificant in present day letters. Nevertheless the railroad has a niche, a small albeit permanent niche, in a thin slice of American literature which cannot be overlooked.

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In compiling the bibliographies the Library of Congress cards have been consulted and notations on L C cards followed as far as practical. In most instances the full name of the author is given as well as the copyright date of the volume in question. This date, in the case of short stories is, however, not necessarily the same year in which each individual story was copyrighted. Frequently a short story or even an entire novel first appeared in a popular magazine and was subsequently reprinted in book form.

Wherever possible the first and last editions or printings of American books are given, if such information can be found on the L C cards, so, that the reader may know if the volume is likely to be in print. If two dates are given they are separated by a semi colon, but the publisher and pagination of the second notation are left out if they are identical with the earlier edition. In the case of many standard authors there are innumerable editions and printings which vary in price and quality.

In this study a book is considered to be any publication other than newspaper or magazine, cloth bound or paper bound with a straight edge. With the exception of some poems, plays, and a few miscellaneous items, no booklets or pamphlets are listed. When a book is not of heavy cardboard or cloth binding it is so indicated immediately following the imprint. All other notations such as the contents, titles of railroad short stories, poems, essays, songs, etc., are given on the line below the imprint.

The author has seen nearly all the volumes enumerated and read a large proportion of them, but on occasions a book, especially of a foreign imprint, was not available. If such a publication is known to deal with railways it is put on the list with as much information as can be ascertained from other sources.

The number of asterisks (\*) indicates the amount of railroad operation contained in a book, the minimum being one asterisk and the maximum four. This is in no sense a literary evaluation, but only an indication of the extent the railroad plays in such work. Other symbols are as follows:

- c. denotes cable railway.
- e. denotes electric railway. (Street, interurban, subway, elevated or electrified steam railroad).
- f. denotes foreign author. (Other than North American).
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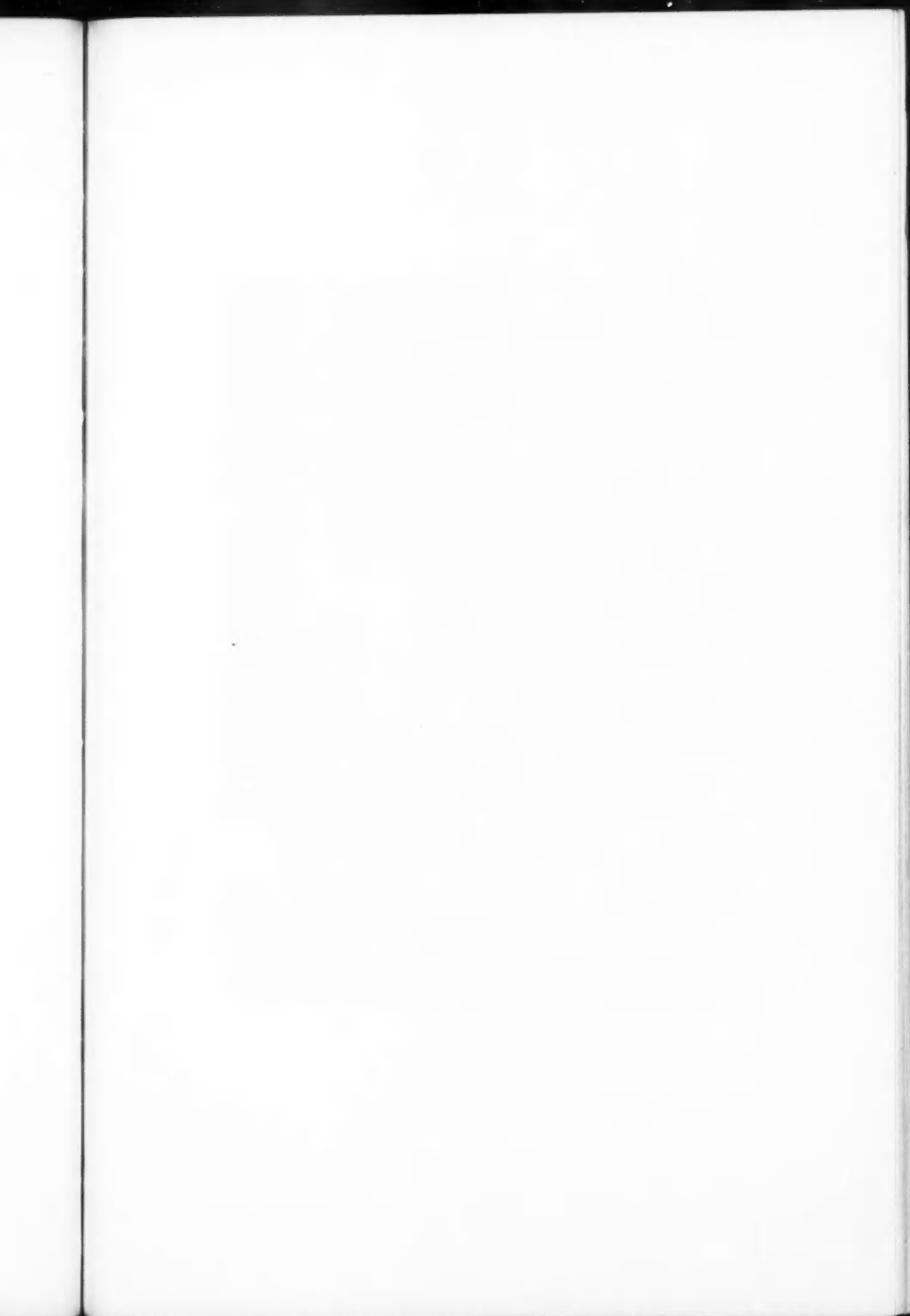
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(Courtesy Doubleday, Doran & Co.)

**FRANK LUCIUS PACKARD**

### CHAPTER III

## American Short Stories

Railroad yarns are especially adaptable to the basic requirements of the short story. Because of their reliance on action—action plus characterization above everything else—the compact, swift moving, down-to-business style of a brief story is desirable. Railroad men are essentially blunt, practical, frank and honest; railroad stories are usually succinct, realistic, direct and sincere. If one carefully designed locomotive will pull a long train adequately, why use two? So reasons the railroader. By the same token the flowery, verbose author obviously has no place in this field. It is not surprising that the quality of the railroad short story is fully equal to, if not above, the average novel on the same subject.

During the period referred to as the Golden Age of railroading (1890-1910) many of the best magazines featured stories on this giant industry. Moreover they were features! For a time it seemed as if the popularity of the rail would eventually overshadow that of the sea. Stories appeared regularly in *The Saturday Evening Post*, *McClure's* and *Scribner's* (to mention only a few) and even the juvenile but exceptionally well edited *Youth's Companion*. This popularity was, however, short lived. Today a story in a well-known periodical (aside from *Railroad Magazine*) is a rarity, practically unknown. There has been a slight increase in the last decade, but even such increase cannot be compared with the splurge at the turn of the century.

Next to Spearman, or perhaps one should say with him, Frank Lucius Packard has a clear board to unquestioned superiority in railroad short story writing. Packard was born of American parents in Montreal, February 2, 1877. Educated at McGill and the University of Liège, Belgium, he later received practical experience in the Canadian Pacific shops. To railroad men he is known as the author of three excellent books of short stories—*On the Iron at Big Cloud*, *Running Special* and *The Night Operator*, but has also written on a variety of other subjects. As the creator of Jimmie Dale and Shanghai Jim he is familiar to almost every lover of mystery and detective stories. Packard at present resides in Lachine, Quebec, a suburb of Montreal, although he is constantly touring the world in quest of material for more stories. He is now the only living author of the Railroad School—the last of that unique group of writers who knew railroading, loved railroading, and put it forever in the annals of American letters.

In subject-matter, setting, and style Packard and Spearman show a striking similarity. Both write about western railroading although the former concerns himself with Canada and the latter with the United States. And they mutually agree that the human element, the emergence of the man—loyal, courageous and victorious, transcends the nicest plot in spite of the fact that victory may spell tragedy, at least in the Ibsenian sense of the word.

Alvah Milton Kerr, another writer of railroad short stories in the early twentieth century worked for over a dozen years as telegraph operator and train dispatcher on the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific Railway. His *The Diamond Key* and *How the Railroad Heroes Won It* are collections of short stories suitable for readers of any age. On the other hand, Kerr's *Young Heroes of Wire and Rail* may be considered of a more juvenile character. He has also written several novels for young folk not pertaining to railroading.

Kerr was born in Athens, Ohio, January 22, 1858. Having received his education in Wisconsin, he entered railroading at an early age, but later turned to journalism. From 1876 to 1888 he was editor of *Up-to-Date*, associate editor of *Belford's Magazine*, editor of *Iroquois Magazine* and editor of *The Chicago Ledger*. From 1888 until his death on September 26, 1924, he devoted practically all of his time to writing or editing.

Although A. W. Somerville cannot strictly be included in the Railroad School since he started writing after 1910, he nevertheless has practically all the characteristics of that group. Son of a railroad man (his father worked for the Burlington), he was born in Ferguson, Missouri, a suburb of St. Louis, on June 9, 1900. His parents moved frequently and "so long as the place was on a railroad it didn't matter particularly." For some time Somerville lived in Kansas City, perhaps the most "railroad" of urban localities, and then returned to St. Louis. His higher education was had at Kenyon College, Gambier, Ohio, but, as he puts it, "on account of the faculty [I] never got a degree."<sup>6</sup>

His first railroad work took him to Marshall, Texas, on the Texas and Pacific, although he has since 1919 worked for many roads. Officially classed as a machinist, Somerville has done about everything a young man can do in this industry. Whether it was inspecting box cars, checking engines, or working for a railroad contractor, he kept his eyes open, meticulously observing every detail and subsequently incorporating his observations in his remarkable yarns.<sup>7</sup> According to critics, "High Water" seems to have left its mark as the best of Somerville's tales having been frequently reprinted in short story anthologies such as *The College Reader* edited by R. M. Lovett and H. M. Jones. For virility, style, fidelity to subject matter and all 'round good story telling Somerville is foremost among present day railroad writers.

His readers were greatly dismayed when he suddenly discontinued contributing stories to the *Saturday Evening Post* and other magazines a few years ago. Indeed, the expression "its the best yarn since Somerville quit writing" has become a convenient way to classify and evaluate a contemporary story. Now, however, the talented young author has reappeared in the *Saturday Evening Post* with his tale of streamlining called "Tin Train."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> "A. W. Somerville," *Saturday Evening Post*, Vol. 201, No. 5, (August 4, 1925), p. 26.

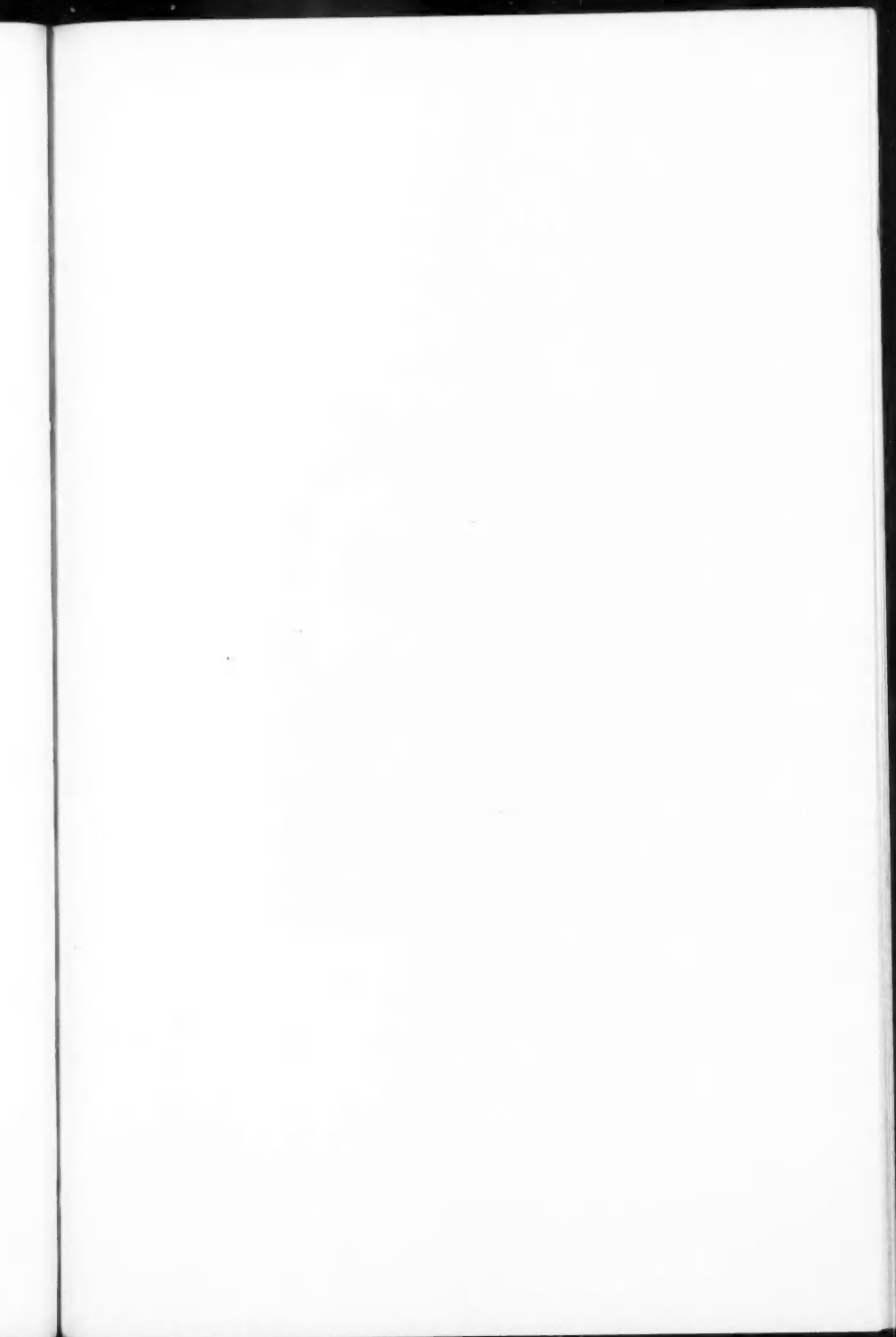
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A. W. SOMERVILLE







DOUG WELCH (Leonid Fink)



Taken story for story the Spearman-Packard-Somerville combination is about the best that can be had in brief railroad tales. No other group of writers as a whole can equal, much less surpass, this triumvirate. Occasionally an individual story will be produced on a par with, or even above, the work of these authors, but for consecutive good output they are second to none. However, we must not construe this to mean that the other old line writers were not good—far from it. Cy Warman with his seven fascinating volumes of short stories produced some really creditable tales. And Hill, too, had some exceptionally good yarns in his *Stories of the Railroad*. But somehow, at least in character analysis and human understanding, it would seem that the above mentioned trio have the edge over the other authors. This may be only a point of view, but the writer has presented it for what it is worth.

To give in some detail a biographical sketch of an author who has written only one railroad short story, would seem at the first blush to be rank heresy. However, since the writer in question has written probably the most popular story of trains appearing in the last decade, he is worthy of notice. The article "Mrs. Union Station" (*Post Stories of 1937*) is about a young lady who married a railroad "fiend"—one who calls out all the stations on the New Haven's "Shore Line" between Boston and New York while shaving in the morning, and one who inadvertently neglects his first wedding anniversary for a model-railway meeting. Only the presence of a quick-witted conductor prevents the separation of the pair after the long-suffering wife attempts to run away with a college friend who turns out to be a rabid *ship model maker*.

The story is indicative of the unprecedented interest in small-scale trains and the rapidly increasing railfan activities throughout the land. Unlike most stories of this nature it had a broad general appeal combined with flawless railroad details. To put it in common parlance, one can readily say that Doug Welch knows his stuff.

The author, "an old time table reader from way back," was born in Boston, June 21, 1906. He was graduated from the University of Washington where he majored in English. Always identified with newspapers, Welch has successively been a reporter on the *Tacoma News Tribune*, *Cleveland Plaindealer*, *Seattle Times*, and *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*. Doug Welch resides in Seattle.

There have been two representative collections of railroad short stories issued by magazines in which they appeared. Years ago Scribner's put out a midget book entitled *Stories of the Railway* while the now defunct *McClure's* published a tidy little volume called *The Railroad*. Both have long since gone out of print, although they are available in many second-hand book stores. Other railroad "shorts" include E. W. Swan's *Along the Line* and Ward W. Adair's *The Lure of the Iron Trail*.

With the coming of *Epic Peters*, *Pullman Porter* by Octavus Roy Cohen, the Negro, hitherto forgotten in railroading, assumed a position of importance. In a series of cleverly written stories originally appearing in the *Saturday Evening Post*, Cohen's brass buttoned hero

became known all over the nation. Just as Chessie has officially become the C & O's much publicized cat,<sup>9</sup> or as Miss Phebe Snow was heralded by the Lackawanna,<sup>10</sup> so Epic Peters was at one time, unofficially, the Southern's most distinguished porter.

Among the standard authors the Old Dominion gave us that kindly Southerner, Thomas Nelson Page. His railroad tales—"Run to Seed" and "The New Agent" show deep understanding and a wealth of local color. But most famous of Dixie's *littérateurs* is O. Henry (William Sidney Porter), a past master in the art of short story writing and author of two railroad yarns called "Holding Up a Train" and "The Passing of Black Eagle." Or looking northward, Owen Wister has an amusing story of an encounter with a writer of railroad fiction called "Stanwick's Business." Hawthorne, too, will be remembered for *The Celestial Railroad*, a modernized *Pilgrim's Progress* to fit into the worldly age of railways and machinery.

An unusually clever story of a legal tilt with a short line written by Ted Dealy, an eminent Texas newspaper man, is given in "Blackstone Does His Stuff" contained in *Best Short Stories from the Southwest* edited by Hilon R. Greer. But probably the most famous semi-railroad short story ever written is Ellis Parker Butler's *Pigs Is Pigs*. This humorous tale deals with the phenomenal birth rate of the chubby quadrupeds and the futile attempt of an express agent to collect freight and storage charges.

The street railway is represented by *Trolley Folly*, a light, humorous story of a runaway electric car, by Henry Wallace Phillips. Elliott Flower tells of a novel method of effecting a traction merger with the aid of insurance in "An Incidental Speculation." Even Thomas Nelson Page has a brief sketch entitled "Old Sue" describing a refractory mule on a little southern tramway.

Of late two new authors have written some first rate tales of railroading. They are Jesse Stuart, with his "Huey, the Engineer" in Edward J. H. O'Brien's *The Best Short Stories of 1938* and William Wister Haines (mentioned in the previous chapter), author of "Remarks: None" included in the same anthology for 1935. Stuart's theme is a backwoods shortline in Kentucky, whereas Haines' subject is the electrification of the great Pennsylvania Railroad.

We conclude that the railroad is best portrayed in the short story. Nearly all of the standard railway authors have found that the brief, rapid-fire incidents occurring in the everyday life of trainmen call for a story which is equally compact and to the point—a story which *moves*. Action and character analysis given clearly and concisely are preferred to love interest and nicely fabricated plots. Moreover, with one or two exceptions, all the outstanding railroad authors have lived

<sup>9</sup> Ruth Carroll has written two books for very young children, called *Chessie* (N. Y., Julian Messner, Inc., 1936, 48p.) and *Chessie and Her Kittens* (N. Y., Julian Messner, Inc., 1937, 48p.).

<sup>10</sup> The following is typical of the verse written about Miss Snow many years ago:

Miss Snow draws near  
The cab to cheer  
The level-headed Engineer

Whose watchful sight  
Makes safe her flight  
Upon the Road of Anthracite

the life they wrote. There is, generally speaking, no substitute for actual on-the-line experience, barring the uncanny powers of observation as evinced in the works of Frank H. Spearman. Yet in all America there was but *one* Spearman.

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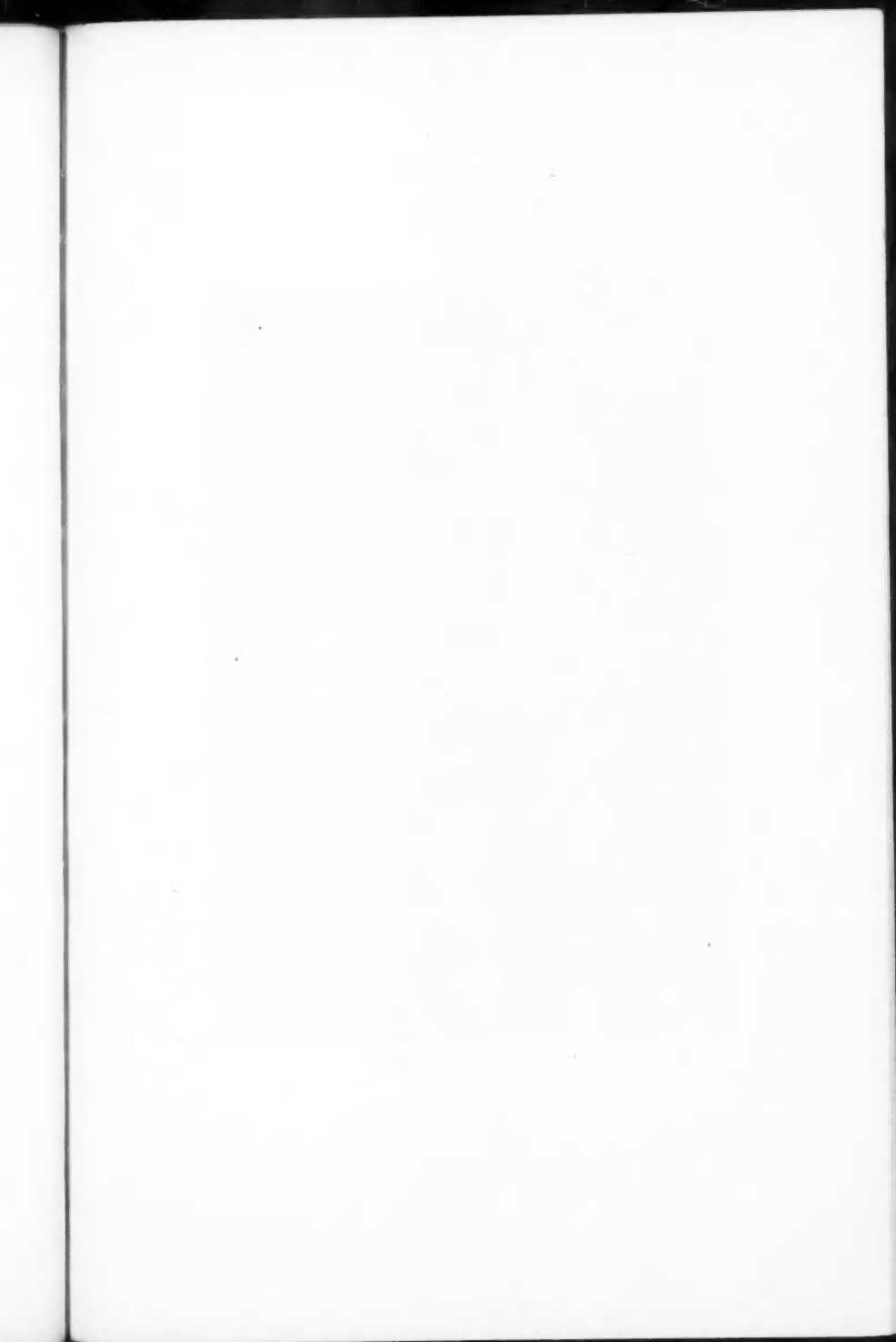
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BURTON EGBERT STEVENSON

## CHAPTER IV

### American Juvenile Fiction

Almost any subject, especially one of a romantic nature, which has an adult appeal will eventually have its juvenile repercussions. The railroad is no exception to this rule. Originally juvenile fiction tended to follow the general interest in railroads, reaching its peak at the height of the popularity of this industry. However, youth retained some of his enthusiasm for the Iron Horse when mature readers shifted to other fields. But it must also be remembered that fiction of this type frequently can be, and is, read by "boys" from eight to eighty.

Many stories of this nature appeared in boy's magazines particularly in the old *Youth's Companion*. Indeed, some of the finest tales of railroad life can be found in the yellowing pages of the latter. Not a few of the better known authors, at one time or other, wrote for this unusual periodical.

Probably the leading juvenile railroad author of today is Burton Egbert Stevenson. His "Boys' Story of the Railroad Series" though written shortly after the turn of the century, has had a steady and continued sale to the present date. Born in Chillicothe, Ohio, November 9, 1872, Stevenson made good in his own locality. Save for a few years at Princeton University and later in Europe during the war, all his achievements, and they are many, were consummated in the town of his birth. Starting as a reporter, he rapidly rose to city editor of the *Chillicothe Daily News* in 1894, and in the same capacity with the *Daily Advertiser* four years later. Having been a railroad reporter for a time, he frequented the shops and general offices of the Baltimore and Ohio in his own community. It was on these visits that he received his railroad experience, vicariously, to be sure, but none the less direct from its source, and incorporated it in *The Young Section-Hand*, *The Young Train Dispatcher*, *The Young Train Master* and finally *The Young Apprentice*. Most of the incidents in his stories are real, depicting Wadsworth (the division headquarters in the series), as Chillicothe. For authentic railroad information, good sound writing, and a genuine spirit of the industry, there are few juvenile railroad stories which can rank with the work of this scholarly Ohioan. A boys' novel which will entertain and inform at the same time is indeed a rare combination; yet Stevenson succeeded in doing this to the full.

Besides having written over forty books Burton Stevenson is known to librarians and the general public as the compiler of the ever popular *Home Book of Verse*, *Home Book of Modern Verse* and the *Home Book of Quotations, Classic and Modern*. Incidentally Stevenson is a librarian himself, having managed the Chillicothe Public Library since 1899.

But in speaking of prolific writers, the Dumas of authors for young folk was Edward Sylvester Ellis. He was, so to speak, the first novelist to give the railroad a big hand in the pages of juvenile fiction. Born in Geneva, Ohio, April 11, 1840, he received his higher education at the state normal school of New Jersey. At nineteen, he became known as a writer and in his early thirties held the coveted position of superin-

tendent of the Trenton Public Schools. Although many of his earlier books were "dime novels" they were of a higher caliber than the average paper-bound thriller. His first important book, *Seth Jones*, was one of the earliest of Beadle's "ten centers", having reached a sale of over 600,000 copies, printed in a half dozen languages.<sup>11</sup> Prior to the middle of the eighties he wrote fiction but afterward branched out into history and biography, as well as grammar, arithmetic, physiology, and mythology. An inordinately productive author (he wrote over 100 books)<sup>12</sup> Ellis wrote for at least six publishers and under a variety of pen names. In 1891 he edited an illustrated juvenile weekly called *Holiday*.

In spite of the rapidity with which he turned out a novel, he may be considered one of the best juvenile writers in the Alger-Optic-Ellis era. Though but a few of his works are being read today they enjoyed a tremendous popularity in the 'eighties and 'nineties. His railroad books, in common with most of his other novels, are often of the "rags to riches" variety with considerable moralizing intermixed with ladder climbing. Yet they are also characterized as good railroading. Among his best known titles are *From the Throttle to the President's Chair*, *The Young Conductor*, and *The P. Q. & G.* Ellis lived in Upper Montclair, New Jersey, but died at Cliff Island, Maine, on June 20, 1916.

Of his contemporaries, Horatio Alger is probably the best known, with Oliver Optic (William Taylor Adams) closely following in popularity. Alger wrote two railroad novels, *The Train Boy* and *The Erie Train Boy*, depicting the rapid rise of a lad in accordance with the typical Algerian formula. Optic's *Through by Daylight* shows more restraint and less made-to-pattern construction. The latter concerns the operation of a steam dummy on a college campus by several enterprising young men. However, he wrote one story entitled *Oliver Optic's Engineer's Sketches* in which, as far as wrecks are concerned, there is no restraint.

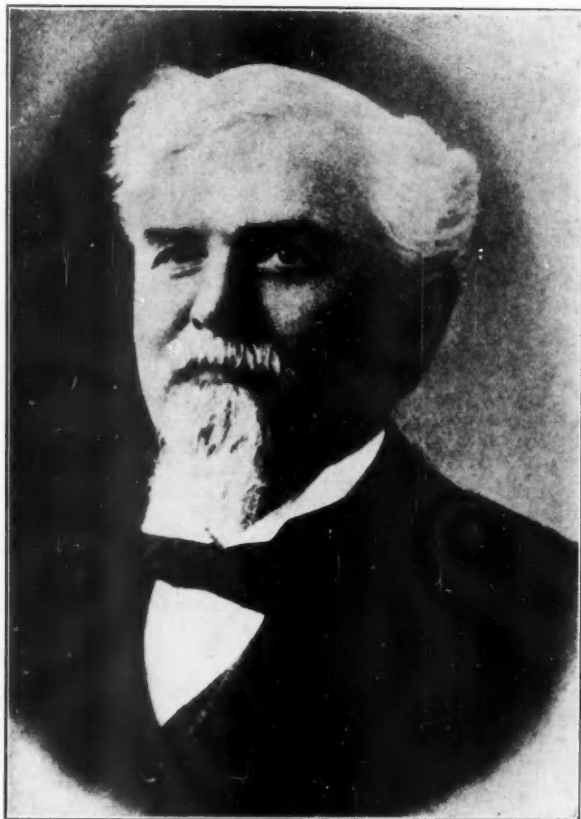
One of the earliest semi-railroad novels extant is Jacob Abbott's non-railroad title *On the Erie Canal*, written about the middle of the nineteenth century. It gives a vivid picture of early train travel as well as the life on a colorful Erie packet.

Among the contemporary series writers the late Allen Chapman is, perhaps, the best known. Until recently his popular "Ralph On the Railroad Series" could be found in nearly every book store catering to young folk. The ten volume set, starting with *Ralph of the Roundhouse*, embraces many phases of railroad operation. The same may be said of F. E. Lovell Coombs' "The Railroad Scout Series," containing such titles as *The Lost Train*, *The Haunted Station*, etc. The author, a prominent Canadian Scot official, has also written *The Young Railroaders*—a book which includes most of his railroad stories.

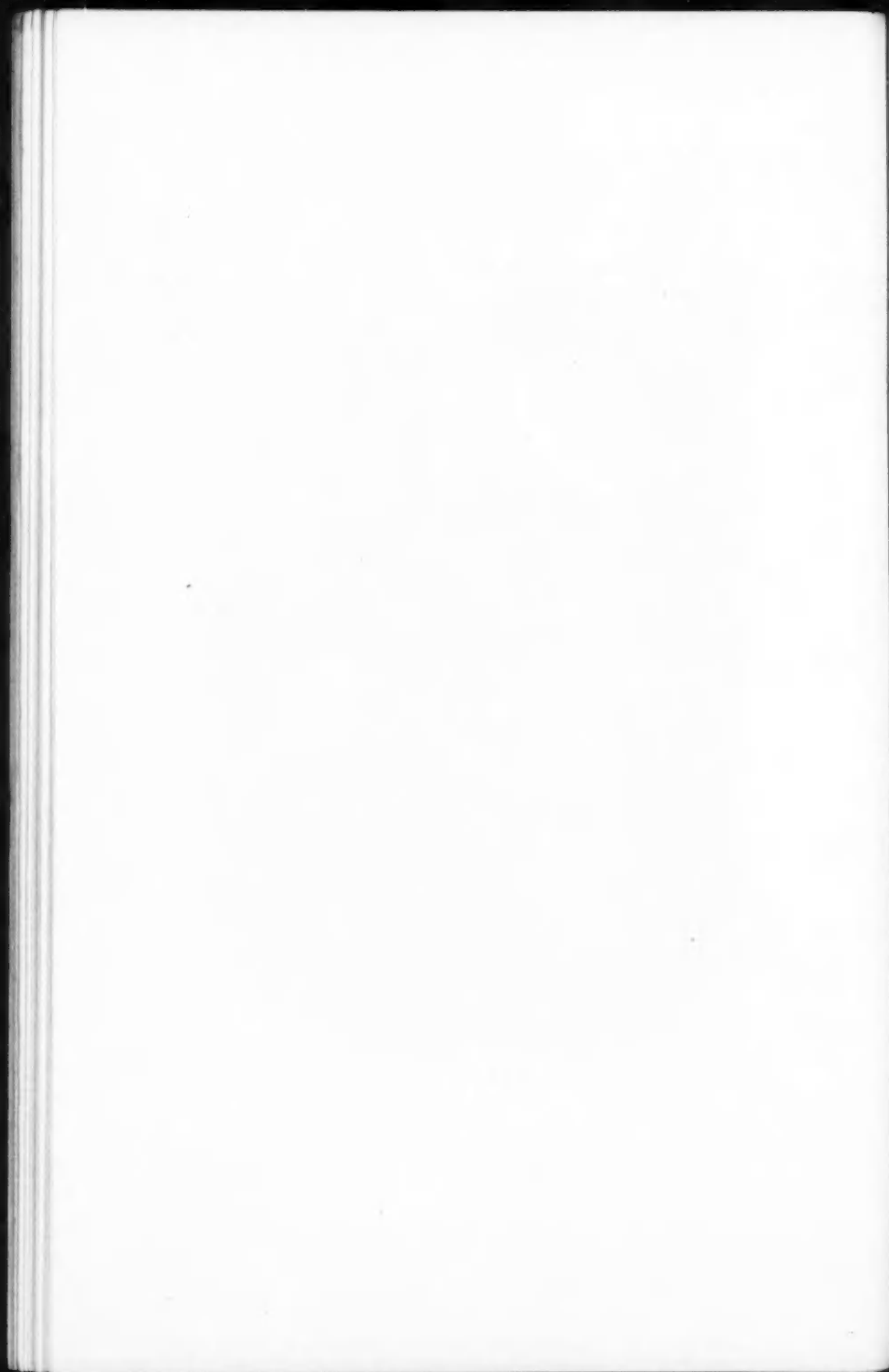
If there is one volume which could be called a juvenile railroad classic, it is Herbert E. Hamblen's *We Win*. Hamblen knows full well

<sup>11</sup> Harvey, Charles M., "The Dime Novel in American Life," *Atlantia Monthly*, Vol. 100, No. 1, (July, 1907), p. 40.

<sup>12</sup> Gustav Davidson of the Rare Book Room, Library of Congress, who is making a study of the juvenile series writers in the latter half of the nineteenth century, puts this figure over 200, and he is still finding additional titles.



EDWARD SYLVESTER ELLIS



how to impart the atmosphere and lingo of the old time trainman, and he does it to a nicety in this book. Other titles like Alvah Milton Kerr's *Young Heroes of Wire and Rail* and Francis Lynde's *The Donovan Chance* make suitable additions to juvenile railroadana.

But what juvenile story for real understanding, yet withal so simple and home-spun, can compare with *Pickett's Gap*? Appearing first in *Youth's Companion*, this delightful novel by Homer Greene was subsequently put in book form and frequently reprinted. It's a little story in a rural setting about a country family told in a *big* way. The building of a railroad through Abner Pickett's farm, incidentally, provides the background for many events on which the story hinges. It's not a 100 per cent. railroad story but there is little doubt that Greene is just as much a master in delineating the humble way of life as Hamblen is of the hazardous railway.

A representative collection of short stories by numerous authors is assembled in the *Boys on the Railroad* published by Harper in 1909. Two other books describing the operation of a railway and illustrating this by stories, are to be found in Irving Crump's *The Boys' Book of Railroads* and George Clarence Hoskin's *The Iron Horse*.

Aside from the completion of the first transcontinental railway, there is probably no incident which caught the novelist's fancy more than the famous Andrews' raiders in Georgia during the Civil War. Both *Tom of the Raiders* by Austin Bishop and *Chasing an Iron Horse* by Edward Robins describe that ill-fated trip over the Western and Atlantic Railroad. Falling also in a semi-historical category is Mary A. Peary's *The Red Caboose*. Based on Admiral Peary's discovery of the North Pole, it is chiefly concerned with the Erie's "crummy" which was donated by the railroad for the expedition. The car was put on a boat and used as a cabin. And while on the subject of northern climes, Theodore and Winifred Harper's *His Excellency and Peter*, describes rail construction on the bleak steppes of Siberia.

For juvenile readers interested in electric railways there is a chapter or two in Edward Stratemeyer's *Dave Porter at Oak Hall*, recounting the experiences of "A Wild Moonlight Trolley Ride." The owl run, taken in an open electric car commandeered by a group of preparatory school students, is one of the extra curricular activities not sponsored by the faculty.

In analyzing juvenile fiction one should not take for granted that because a story is designated for youth, it must necessarily consist of amateur writing. The railroad tales of Burton E. Stevenson, Herbert Hamblen, and Homer Greene, for example, are superior to the average story of an adult appeal on the same subject. Like model trains, some are mere toys lasting a few years and are discarded; others as in the case of accurate made-to-scale reproductions, have a fascination which lasts a life time. True, there are no Tom Sawyers or Huckleberry Finns in this literature but there are books which bear reading and re-reading irrespective of age. Then again, a much larger percentage can be likened to a transfer: it fulfills its purpose, subject to certain limitations, along a specific line, for a designated time. Outside of this arbitrary purview they are valueless except to collectors.

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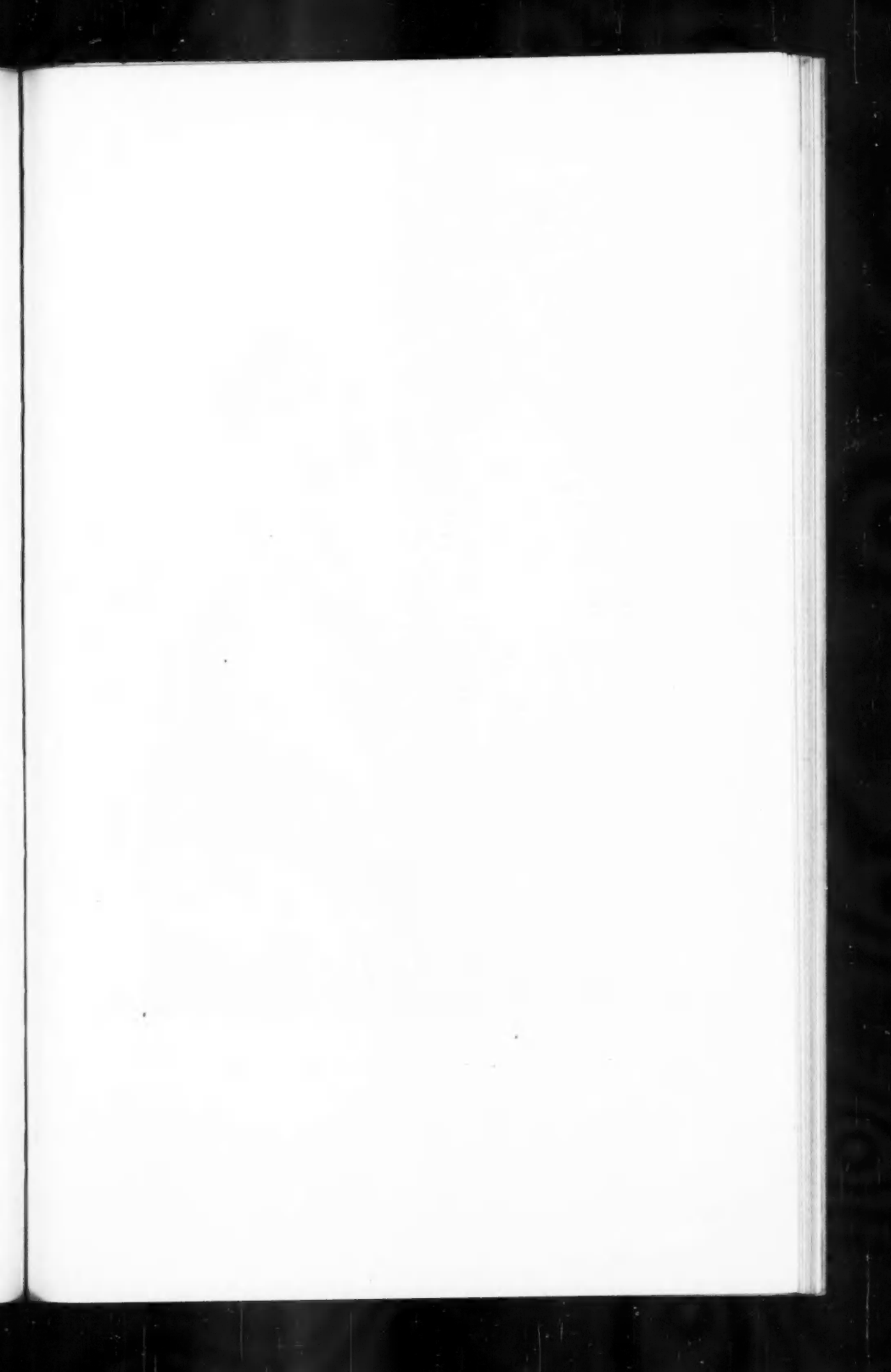
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PORTRAIT OF RUDYARD KIPLING BY WILLIAM NICHOLSON

## CHAPTER V

### English Fiction and Translations

Although no other continent has the quantity of railway fiction found in North America, some exceptionally good stories come from the pens of foreign authors. Because of the variety of languages, only a small portion is known to Americans and most of this has been translated. But regardless of the inaccessibility it must not be forgotten that our country owes much, directly and indirectly, to the world at large. To omit the outstanding writers of others lands, a few of whom are widely read on this continent, would give us a one-sided view of railway literature.

The fiction of England differs vastly from that found in America. In Great Britain the railways were built after the country had been densely populated. Owing to rigid inspection at the outset the reckless devil-may-care spirit so characteristic of the early railroads in this country had little opportunity to assert itself abroad. There was in the British Isles, to be sure, a Railway Mania, exuberant and colorful, yet more restrained than in the United States. The towering mountains, great expanses of land, hostile Indians, and rugged frontiersmen inextricably woven into our own railroad fiction never existed in England. Yet the average Englishman is very much interested in railways, possibly more so than most Americans. But his reading about them is of the more technical or general type. The *British Railway Magazine* in many respects resembles the *Railroad Magazine* of this country, although the former contains practically no fiction.

Surprising to most Americans, one of the finest railroad short stories ever published was written by an Englishman about the Boston and Albany in our own country. It was during Kipling's four year stay in Vermont that he completed the world-famous ".007". Rudyard Kipling was born in Bombay, December 30, 1865, and received his education at the United Service College, Westward Ho, North Devon, England. Incidentally, this institution served as the setting for his schoolboy novel *Stalky and Co.* At the age of 17 he returned to India to become sub-editor of the *Lahore Civil and Military Gazette*, and at the age of 21 completed his *Departmental Ditties*—a book of light satirical verse. From 1887 to 1889 Kipling travelled through India, China, Japan, and America taking notes wherever he went and later incorporating them into a two-volume work entitled *From Sea to Sea*. While in London he met Wolcott Balestier,<sup>13</sup> a young American author and publisher who collaborated with him in writing *The Naulahka*. Kipling later married Wolcott's sister, Caroline Starr Balestier<sup>14</sup> and for some time lived in Dummerston, Vermont, just across the Brattleboro line.<sup>15</sup> While in "The Green Mountain State" he wrote two *Jungle Books*, *Captains Courageous* and some short stories in *The Day's*

<sup>13</sup> Rice, Howard C., *Rudyard Kipling in New England*, p. 13.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Work.<sup>16</sup> Had it not been for an argument with a near relative over a boundary dispute, a case which eventually went to court and made the feud public, Kipling most likely would never have left the country. As it was he hurriedly moved back to England in August 1896.<sup>17</sup>

Kipling is almost as well known for his poetry as for his prose. Such poems of his as "Recessional," "Gunga Din" and "On the Road to Mandalay" are universally known and deserve a permanent place in world literature. Incidentally, he is the author of "The King" with its oft quoted lines—

"Romance!" the season-tickets mourn,  
"He never ran to catch his train,  
But passed with coach and guard and horn—  
And left the local—late again  
Confound Romance!" . . . And all unseen  
Romance brought up the nine-fifteen.<sup>18</sup>

Because of his virile, forthright poetry, his masterly short stories and romantic fiction, Kipling was awarded the Nobel prize for literature in 1907. He died in London on January 18, 1936.

In *Kim*, one of his longer novels which, by the way, gives an excellent picture of Indian life, there are several pages describing the ordeals of Asiatic railway travel. The *Naulahka* opens with a short sketch of western railroading in the United States although the bulk of the book has its setting in India. But for a graphic picture of a record run from coast to coast by a railroad official, Kipling's *Captains Courageous* is more than of passing interest. Indeed, to insure the utmost accuracy he wrote to a railway executive of his acquaintance to plan the route, junction points and running time of the special. When the story was finished another official was so pleased with the yarn that he arranged to beat the schedule of Kipling's train over the identical route and succeeded in doing so.<sup>19</sup>

Kipling's greatest contribution to railroad literature, however, is his above mentioned ".007". Based on personification in which the locomotives tell their story, this has become one of the most popular of this type of story ever written. It has a real flavor of the rail combined with accurate observation (even though his nomenclature betrays a distinctly English influence) and correct details. Still it is not flawless, and for the benefit of the reader who thinks it too highly extolled I shall quote a paragraph from a "Section Boss" in *The Argonaut* for August 16, 1897:

"Mr. Kipling is a keen observer," he declares, "and writes pretty good American for an outsider, but if he had spent a night in a roundhouse with his ears open he would never have used 'loco' for locomotive, or have omitted the familiar 'engine' altogether; he would not have said 'bogies' when he meant 'trucks'; he would not have allowed a parlor-car to be hitched to a suburban commuter's train 'ahead of the caboose'; he would

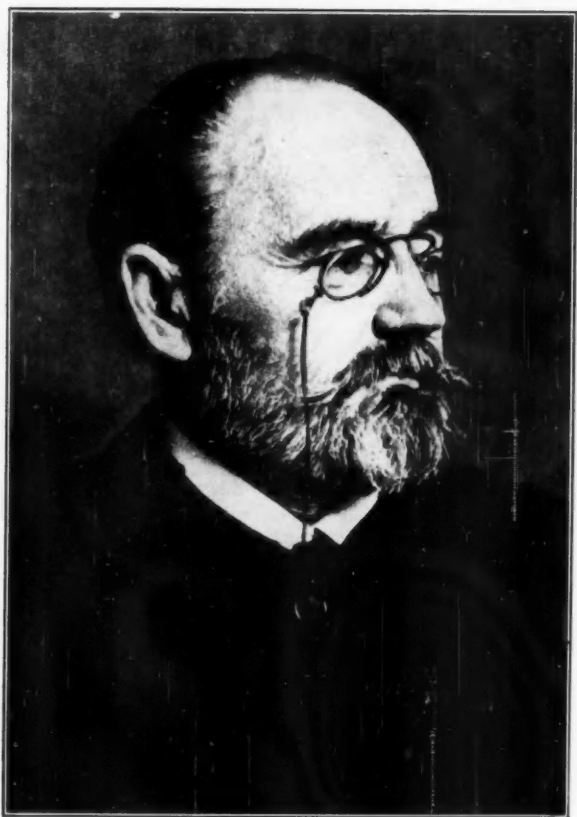
<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20.

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<sup>18</sup> Kipling, Rudyard, *Rudyard Kipling's Verse, Inclusive Edition, 1885-1932*, p. 432.

<sup>19</sup> Kipling, Rudyard, *Something of Myself*, p. 140.

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(Courtesy E. P. Dutton & Co.)  
**EMILE ZOLA**  
(September, 1902)



not have made his engines speak of themselves as 'Americans' (in the sense of pattern), or painted his hero green with a red 'buffer-bar.'"

\* \* \*

"I suppose it's all right to strengthen a situation by omitting the guard-rail from an eighty foot bridge—it gives a pleasant, breezy, Western, get-there-or bust, nigger-on-the-safety-valve movement, and maybe it's good fiction to bring about the catastrophe with a hundred-pound piglet who 'rolled under the pilot' and thereby caused the 'bogies' to lift; but on plain, every-day railroads there is a guard rail at every open culvert, and even the illustrations to Mr. Kipling's story admit cow-catchers."

Of French novels *The Human Beast* by Emile Zola has an excellent railway setting although it is one of the most terrible and gruesome stories ever written. Emile Edouard Charles Antoine Zola was born in Paris on April 2, 1840. His father died when he was very young, leaving the boy in abject poverty. As a means of livelihood Zola turned to writing and his first book *Contes à Ninum*, published in 1864, attracted some attention. But with the completion of *L'Assommoir* (1878?), an epic of drink, he made a fortune. He later wrote some twenty novels in the Rougon-Macquart series, a detailed study of French life, society and the role heredity played in human conduct. Probably his best liked story is *Le Débâcle*, written in 1892.<sup>20</sup>

From the terrace of his home in Medan, Zola could see the trains of the Western Railway and he determined to write a novel on railroad life. By taking many trips on the foot plate, note-book in hand, he studied that Great French trunk line.<sup>21</sup> The result of his labors—*The Human Beast* (*Le Bête Humaine*) published in 1890 is a grim, realistic story about one Jacques Macquart, a locomotive engineer with marked sadistic traits. It is part of the Rougon-Macquart series. Emile Zola died in Paris, September 20, 1902.

Zola is important in the study of the American novel because of his influence on several authors in this country, particularly Frank Norris. Norris' railroad work *The Octopus* shows Zolaesque traits, though not as extensively as do his *McTeague* and *Vandover and the Brute*.

Having briefly discussed two noted European authors, I deem it advisable to mention some of the other foreign writers. In British fiction there are several excellent examples of stories pertaining to the carriers. For instance, Charles Dickens, the great sociological novelist, wrote a bizarre tale called "The Signalman." It concerns the death of a railway worker, killed by a train in the mouth of a tunnel. Dickens also wrote a little story entitled "Mugby Junction" a parody on the restaurant facilities, such as existed at Rugby, where he was forced to stop until a burning coach was detached from his train. "Mugby Junction" is said to have been bought by 250,000 people during the first week of publication.<sup>22</sup> The exceedingly clever and original Robert

<sup>20</sup> Barbousse, Henri, *Zola*, tr. by Mary Balairdie Greene and Frederick C. Greene, p. 189.

<sup>21</sup> Sherard, Robert H., *Emile Zola*, p. 241.

<sup>22</sup> Thomas, John, "The Railway Adventures of Charles Dickens," *Railway Magazine*, Vol. LXXXIII, No. 496, (October 1938), p. 239.

Barr has some good railroad material in his novels and short stories of American life including *The Victors*, *Speculations of John Steele*, and *The Woman Wins*. In some degree, Barr might be called the Englishman's O. Henry, owing to the unusual and unexpected endings found in many of his short stories. Some other good railway yarns are to be found in Charles Lever's *Tales of the Trains* and in James Ferguson's *Stories of the Rail*. Across the Scottish border, W. E. Aytoun's "The Glenmutchkin Railway" (Volume II of the *Library of English Fiction*) is a humorous tale of railway speculation in the Highlands. One might also mention some of the present day authors such as L. A. G. Strong with his little story "The Gates"; W. Pett Ridge who wrote *Thanks to Sanderson* and *On Company's Service*; Maurice Griffiths and his Anglo-American novel *Dempster & Son*; Alan Sullivan's Canadian story *The Great Divide*; or W. B. Maxwell known for the short story called "The Long Distance Train" in *Great English Short Stories*, edited by Lewis Melville and Reginald Hargreaves. Juvenile readers will find R. M. Ballantine's *Iron Horse* one of the few books of this type that appeared in American libraries.

Of English railroad detective stories there is truly no end. Indeed, the foreign compartment cars make such an ideal setting for murder, that few British mystery writers can overlook their manifold possibilities. Yet they have shamefully employed the passenger coach as a vehicle for tragedy and become so engrossed in plots and counter plots as to preclude all accuracy and elementary details of good railway procedure. In short, once their purpose is achieved they practically forget (or did they ever know?) everything about the steel highway. But there are some authors who will stick to orthodox railroading, come what may. Foremost among these is England's No. 1 literary criminologist, A. Conan Doyle, with his short story entitled "The Lost Special." Other "ringers" are Douglas C. Brown's *The Stolen Boat Train*, and neck-in-neck for distance and quality Graham Greene's *Orient Express* and Lawrence G. Blochman's *Bombay Mail*. Then, too, there is *The Extra Passenger* by Douglas Timins with its setting on the Trans Andine Railway in South America, and his *The Phantom Train* concerning a short line in the western part of the United States. But when a clergyman such as Victor L. Whitechurch can temporarily forget his spiritual duties and stoop to such mundane things as the permanent way and speeding trains that is something worth reading about. His *Thrilling Stories of the Railway* is a collection of short detective tales. Another good short story is "The Mystery of the Sleeping-Car Express" by Freeman F. Crofts, found in *The Second Omnibus of Crime* edited by Dorothy Sayers.

For the tramway enthusiast, D. H. Lawrence has a short story called "Tickets Please," describing a small electric railway in the English Midlands shortly after the World War. It is one of the few trolley stories found in literature of the United Kingdom.

Crossing to France one becomes aware of how the language differences retard the interchange of literature between the two countries. Be this as it may, no linguistic barrier can stem the popularity of Jules Verne's *Around the World in 80 Days*. To be sure, this juvenile



ZOLA WITH HIS DAUGHTERS



classic not only describes early rail travel in America but also has an interesting reference to the first issue of the *Railway Pioneer* of the Union Pacific, probably the first periodical to be printed on a train. Another short story of the *chemin de fer* is "The 10.50 Express"—a short mystery tale by Maurice Level.

Although Germany is usually considered supreme in the fields of science, engineering, and music, she has given the world one of the greatest contemporary writers—Thomas Mann. His popular *Stories From Three Decades* contains a vivid sketch of a "Railway Accident." Gerhart Hauptmann is another modern author from the Vaterland and is represented in Bennett A. Cerf's selection of *Great German Short Novels and Stories* with his "Flagman Thiel." This *Eisenbahn* story, characteristic of the literature of Germany, is somewhat heavier than those of France or England.

Russian realism and its preponderance of the tragic are admirably illustrated in V. M. Garshin's *The Signal*. About a plebian track-walker who tried to wreck a train to revenge his cruel and autocratic superior, it is typical of the morbid vein of Russian letters. The story has been incorporated in the *Best Russian Short Stories* edited by Thomas Seltzer.

Scandinavian literature though containing much of the gaunt realism found in that of Russia seldom sinks so deep in the mire of futility. A good picture of rural Norwegian life can be found in "The Railroad and the Churchyard." Written by Björnstjerne Björnson, Nobel prize winner and outstanding writer of his country, it is a simple folk tale told with considerable charm and sympathy.

In southern Europe, Maurus Jókai, that scholarly Hungarian author and statesman, has a glowing picture of a railway wreck in his Transylvanian novel *Dr. Dumany's Wife*. Notwithstanding its depreciation due to translation it remains one of the finest descriptions of a train wreck found in print.

To conclude, we find considerably less railroad fiction in foreign countries than in the United States. Owing to the absence of the frontier and to the settled condition of the British Isles before the coming of the railway, English tales do not have the pioneer traits so frequently associated with American stories of trainmen. Again, as already alluded to, the Englishman, prefers the technical and general railroad literature to the novel. There are, however, some fine stories produced by authors in Great Britain and other countries, probably the greatest of which proceeded from the pen of Rudyard Kipling.

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Notes on bibliographies and explanation of symbols are given on page 15.

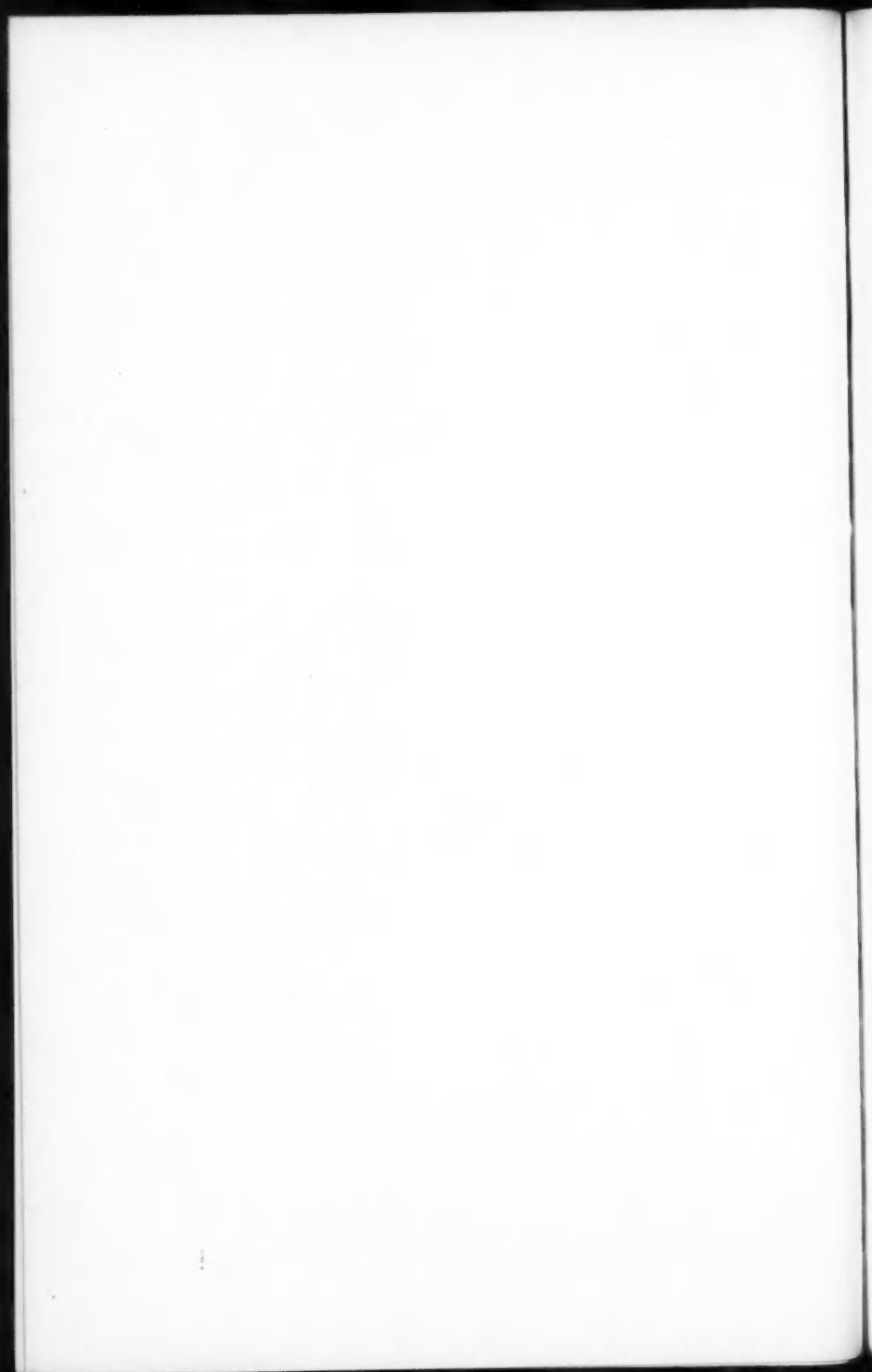
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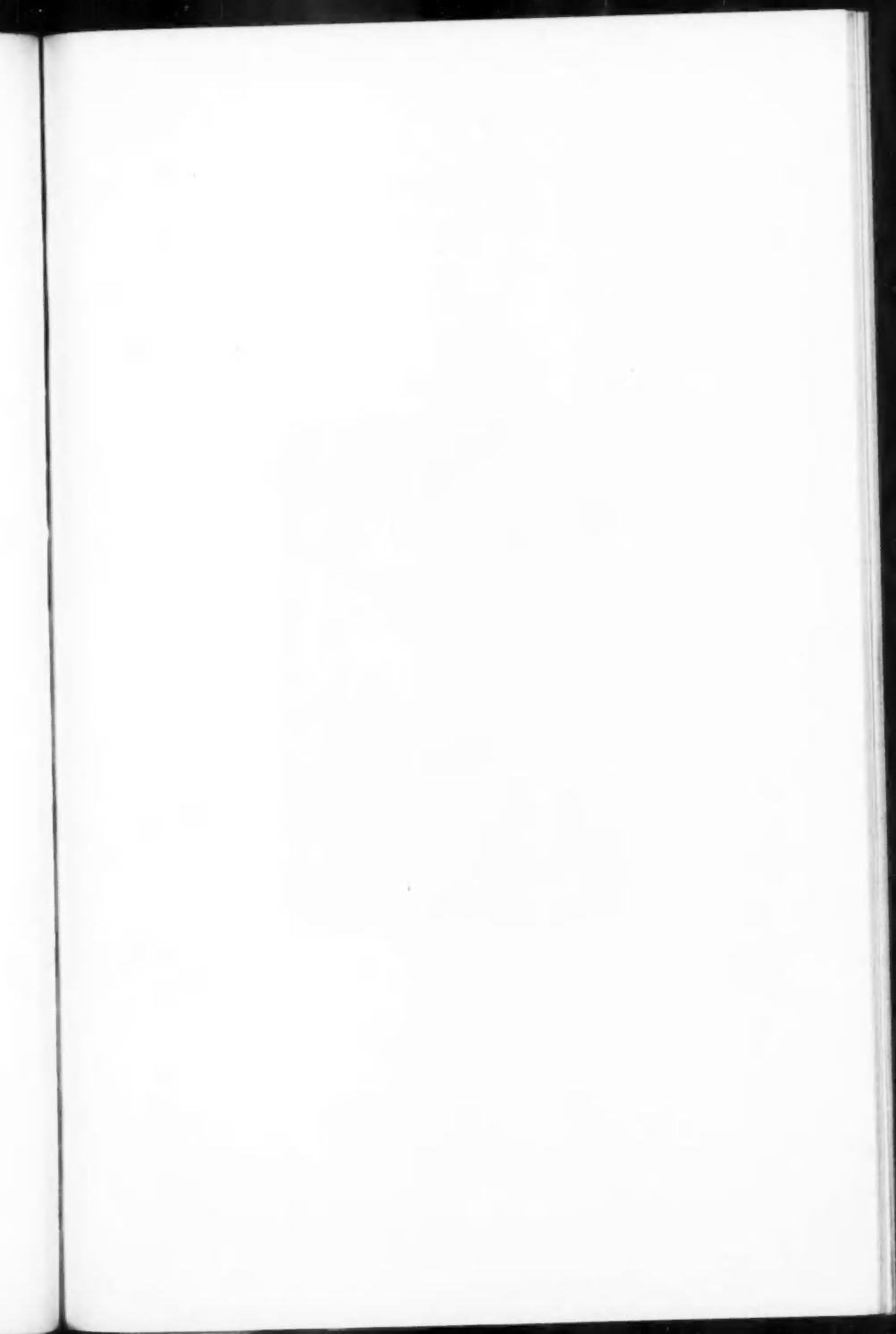
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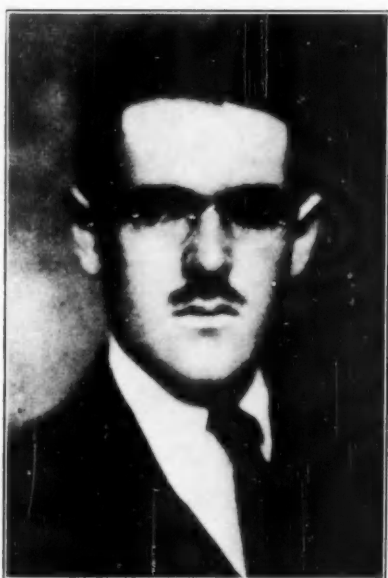
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ARTHUR CREW INMAN

## CHAPTER VI

### Poetry and Verse

It could be said with considerable justification that railroad poetry is largely emotion governed by intellect. One short poem will convey more of the atmosphere of railroading than will many pages of carefully written prose. The measured click of rails, the throbbing of the air pump, the mighty roar of the stack, all lend themselves to the poet's fine sense of rhythm and balance. But more: the inherent fascination of railroading, whether it be a brakeman walking cat-like along the treacherous footboard of a swaying box car, the flickering "markers" of a passenger train leaving a country station in the still of the night, or the noise and activity of a vast freight yard, are all blended and united in the versifier's pen. To be sure, this is not done blatantly, for often it is implied or suggested rather than stated outright, and yet its effect is far reaching. Like a puff of smoke, a good poem expands and coils lazily in the mind and then slowly dissipates into the imagination.

Because a railroad man is practical and a poet usually quite the opposite, it is a rare bit of poetical engineering which will span the two points of view and not alienate either group. Yet Arthur Crew Inman knows enough of the steel highway to have an uncommonly clear insight into its workings and still retain the versifier's aesthetic sense of beauty and artistic touch. Mr. Inman was born in Atlanta, Georgia, May 11, 1895. He, however, came north and received his higher education at Haverford College in Pennsylvania. But Dixie cast a spell over him and some of his southern poems rank among his highest. His "Carolina Branch Line" (in *The Night Express*), for example, has a soothing Indian summer contentment so indigenous to the South.

Inman has written numerous books chiefly of a poetical nature. Among them are *One Who Dreamed* (1917), *Red Autumn* (1920), *Bubbles of Gold* (1923), *American Silhouettes* (1925), and *Shadows of Men* (1925). They are characterized by a pensive wistfulness allied with deep humanity and forbearance. But good as they are, his little railroad volume *The Night Express* probably surpasses them all. Inman himself, writing to the author from his Boston home, admits with considerable satisfaction, that this is his favorite work. One has only to read the very first poem—"Track Song"—to be aware of the high quality of the book. Ere long the reader, at least in his imagination, will—

Follow the onward track  
Across the land and back!  
Click—click—chickety—clack—  
It calls, the lullaby  
Of steel! And who am I  
To rest me moveless here  
While bright rails disappear  
Into the sunset west,  
Over the wide world's crest?<sup>23</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Inman, Arthur Crew, *The Night Express*, p. 1.

And for sheer atmosphere, intensified by each succeeding line, there are few railroad verses which can compare with "On a Deserted Sid-ing."

Only a waste of sand;  
Only a wild bird's cry;  
Only a brooding sea;  
Only a leaden sky;

Only these silent cars,  
Weary, with life passed by;  
Only the ache of years;  
Only the waves' long sigh.<sup>24</sup>

Other books with railroading as their theme are *Tides of Commerce*, by William Carey Sanger, at one time Secretary of the Navy; *Random Rhymes and Rhapsodies of the Rail*, the work of Shandy Maguire, a former railroader; and *Singing Wheels*, by Sidney Warren Mase, the bard of the Missouri Pacific. Then, of course, Warman is represented with such books as *Tales of an Engineer With Rhymes of the Rail*, *Songs of Cy Warman* and that rare, pocket-sized volume *Mountain Melodies*. These, however, while not entirely devoted to the carriers, have railroad verse scattered throughout. His most famous railroad poem is "Will the Lights be White?"—

Oft, when I feel my engine swerve,  
As o'er strange rails we fare,  
I strain my eyes around the curve  
For what awaits us there,  
When swift and free she carries me  
Through yards unknown at night,  
I look along the line to see  
That all the lamps are white.

The blue light marks the crippled car,  
The green light signals slow;  
The red light is a danger light,  
The white light, "let her go."  
Again the open fields we roam,  
And, when the night is fair,  
I look up in the starry dome  
And wonder what's up there.

For who can speak for those who dwell  
Beyond the curving sky?  
No man has ever lived to tell  
Just what it means to die  
Swift toward life's terminal I trend,  
The run seems short to-night;  
God only knows what's at the end—  
I hope the lamps are white.<sup>25</sup>

It is significant that the leading exponent of the frontier in American letters and one of the foremost modern poets who has much of the virility and realism of the West should write on railroads—Bret Harte

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 54.

<sup>25</sup> Warman, Cy, *Songs of Cy Warman*, p. 69.

and Carl Sandburg respectively. It is most significant, too, that the former wrote his greatest railroad poem on the linking of the bands of steel which marked the passing of the frontier, whereas the latter tied the characteristics of the old unpolished West with the mechanized civilization of the East.

There is voluminous material written about the driving of the last spike, its social, political and economic aspects, but Harte's well-known poem "What the Engines Said" puts it all in a nutshell. The frontier poet writing in the *Overland Monthly* inquired—

What was it the Engines said,  
Pilots touching,—head to head  
Facing on the single track,  
Half a world behind each back?<sup>26</sup>

He answered the question to the satisfaction of everyone before the completion of the last verse. Bret Harte has written several other poems of the rail such as "Bill Mason's Bride," "The Ghost that Jim Saw," and "The Station Master of Lone Prairie." They all contain the homely, naive honesty so typical of his nature.

Bret Harte, by the way, was the founder of the *Overland Monthly*—a magazine which only recently ceased publication. It will be remembered, among other things, for its unusual cover design showing a bear standing defiantly on a railroad track symbolizing the passing of the frontier and the conquest of the Iron Horse. Because it also implies the importance of the frontier in the pages of American railroad literature, it is reproduced, through the courtesy of the editor of the *Overland*, on the cover page of this book.

Carl Sandburg's writings are almost a continuation of the same idea with some mutations and, of course, subject to the forces of a modern environment. In "Chicago" for example, the tempo of a contemporary metropolis is not ignored nor is the rough, coarse pioneer influence of its youthful heritage. This poem, one of the best known and certainly one of the most representative of Sandburg's writings, describes the "Windy City" as—

Hog Butcher for the World,  
Tool Maker, Stacker of Wheat,  
Player with Railroads and the Nation's Freight Handler;  
Stormy, husky, brawling,  
City of the Big Shoulders:<sup>27</sup>

Only one line about railroads here, but delete it and the whole tenor of the poem is more or less destroyed. Sandburg, the son of a construction hand on a western carrier<sup>28</sup> and himself an ex-employee in the same line of duty, does not have to be reminded that Chicago is one of the greatest trunk line centers in the entire world. His other works such as "Limited," "Southern Pacific," and "Caboose Thoughts" attest to the fact that he has been "out on the line." "Caboose Thoughts" especially conveys something of the philosophy of trainmen with a dash of mysticism found in comparatively few of Sandburg's writings.

<sup>26</sup> Harte, Bret, *The Poetical Works of Bret Harte*, p. 292.

<sup>27</sup> Sandburg, Carl, *Chicago Poems*, p. 3.

<sup>28</sup> Lowell, Amy, *Tendencies in Modern American Poetry*, p. 204.

There will be ac-ci-dents.  
 I know ac-ci-dents are coming.  
 Smash-ups, signals wrong, washouts, trestles rotten,  
 Red and yellow ac-ci-dents.  
 But somehow and somewhere the end of the run  
 The train gets put together again  
 And the caboose and green tail lights  
 Fade down the right of way like a new white hope.<sup>29</sup>

The pages of literature are filled with authors who have achieved fame for one particular piece of work, a popularity which is never jeopardized by the quality or quantity of their subsequent writings. What Ellis Parker Butler's *Pigs Is Pigs* is to prose, Strickland Gillilan's "Finnigin to Flannigan" is to verse. This dialectal classic, first printed in *Life*, has now been embalmed in Burton Stevenson's monumental tome *The Home Book of Verse* for the benefit of posterity. As everyone knows, it deals with a section foreman's report to his immediate superior, a gentleman with a little more brains and considerably less patience. The laconic account of a derailment in response to his boss's dictum: "Make 'em brief, Finnigin!" is as follows:

Musther Flannigan:  
 Off agin, on agin  
 Gone agin—Finnigin.<sup>30</sup>

Nor must one forget the privileged (or underprivileged) patron of the road who rides scot-free without the aid of pass or ticket. The hobo has become a permanent part of the American Scene, unwanted to be sure, and yet everywhere present. The supreme authority of hobobana, at least regarding verse and song is George Milburn, compiler and editor of the *Hobo's Hornbook*. Like the 'boes themselves the volume is a motley assortment of verse, tattered, soiled (almost to the point of obscenity) and amazingly different. It may contain some poor verse, even wretched rhymes, but it is typical of the knights of the road, a fact which bespeaks its value.

There was, however, another itinerant of a different caste who deserves a nook in travel verse. He was Vachel Lindsay, a contemporary troubadour with all the gift of expression of the nomadic story teller of yesteryear. To read "The Santa Fé Trail" is to glean something of the pageant of transportation in its historic and romantic setting. Only a small part of the poem is devoted to trains, but in blending in with the picture it assumes a dominant role. Here are just a few lines which surge along in the kaleidoscopic view to lend contrast and power.

While smoke-black freights on the double-tracked railroad,  
 Driven as though by the foul fiend's ox-goad,  
 Screaming to the west coast, screaming to the east,  
 Carry off a harvest, bring back a feast,  
 And harvesting machinery and harness for the beast,  
 The hand-cars whiz, and rattle on the rails,  
 The sunlight flashes on the tin dinner-pails.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>29</sup> Sandburg, Carl, *Corn Huskers*, p. 29.

<sup>30</sup> Gillilan, Strickland W., *Including Finnigin*, p. 11.

<sup>31</sup> Lindsay, Vachel, *Selected Poems of Vachel Lindsay*, p. 23.



Like railroad fiction, it is American through and through. It fairly exudes the rampant action and restlessness of our particular brand of civilization, or as foreigners would put it, in the act of becoming civilized. A certain freshness and spontaneity sets it off in a class by itself.

If oratory be the "literature of action," then the speaker's stock-in-trade of poetical renditions should be the exciting, melo-dramatic verse about heroic railroaders. Indeed, in *fin de siècle* oratory of the grade and high-school speaking contests were good for at least one or more recitations concerning the engineer who stuck to his post in the face of inevitable disaster or other tales of a similar nature. Some of it was decidedly good; much of it was unquestionably mediocre. This type of reading went out with the arm waving and violent gesticulating of the pre-automotive days. There is, however, sprinkled in the *Speaker's Garland*, a series of ten volumes, some of the better reading in this category.

To name all the poets who have written railroad verse would be tedious and valueless. But there are selections which stand out because of merit, point of view, or unusual circumstances in which they were written. How many Erie men, for example, know of Joyce Kilmer's lines to "The Twelve-Forty-Five?"

The midnight train is slow and old.  
But of it let this thing be told,  
To its high honor be it said,  
It carries people home to bed.  
My cottage lamp shines white and clear.  
God bless the train that brought me here.<sup>32</sup>

Incidentally, Kilmer was badly injured by an Erie train although he was eventually to meet his death in action during the World War. Probably the best known of the older favorites is John Saxe's "Rhyme of the Rail." Other nineteenth century selections include Walt Whitman's "To a Locomotive in Winter" and John Greenleaf Whittier's "Conductor Bradley" and Oliver Wendell Holmes will be remembered for one of the few poems about trolleys which he calls "The Broomstick Train."

Since then on many a car you'll see  
A broomstick plain as plain can be;  
On every stick there's a witch astride,—  
The String you see to her leg is tied.<sup>33</sup>

Strange to say, the Englishman's zeal for railways has not been carried over to verse, at least not sufficiently so as to justify special mention. Yet there may have been quite a few railway-minded poets whose books have never reached America. It is strange, also, that two navvies—Alexander Anderson and Patrick MacGill have perhaps contributed more poems on the permanent way than have any correspond-

<sup>32</sup> Kilmer, Joyce, *Joyce Kilmer*, edited with memoir by Robert Cortes Holliday. Vol. 1, p. 174.

<sup>33</sup> Holmes, Oliver Wendell, *The Complete Poetical Works of Oliver Wendell Holmes*, p. 303.

ing number of versifiers regardless of their rank in society or letters. Anderson, a gifted surfaceman, wrote his *Songs of the Rail* about fifty years ago whereas MacGill's *Songs of the Dead End* were published about a quarter of a century ago. The latter is still writing and has distributed his railway verse in several books rather than confining most of it to one volume. Other poets who have written more sparingly on rail transportation are Stephen Spender represented by "The Express" and Alfred Noyes with his "In a Railway Carriage," "On a Railway Platform," and a street railway selection called "The Electric Tram."

In general it can be said that railroad poetry and verse impart something of the lilt of the rails and the romance of the carriers even better than prose. Because good poetry leaves much to the imagination, it can be read and re-read, and each succeeding time present a new approach or angle which leads on to innumerable avenues of thought. The philosophical, ultra-sensitive, nay, even spiritual characteristics of a poet are seldom found in a railroad man, and those railroaders who fall under the spell of the muse seldom rise to the distinction of first rate poets. On the other hand, some unusually creditable verse comes from trainmen and executives although most of the best poetry about the carriers is the product of the non-railroad man.

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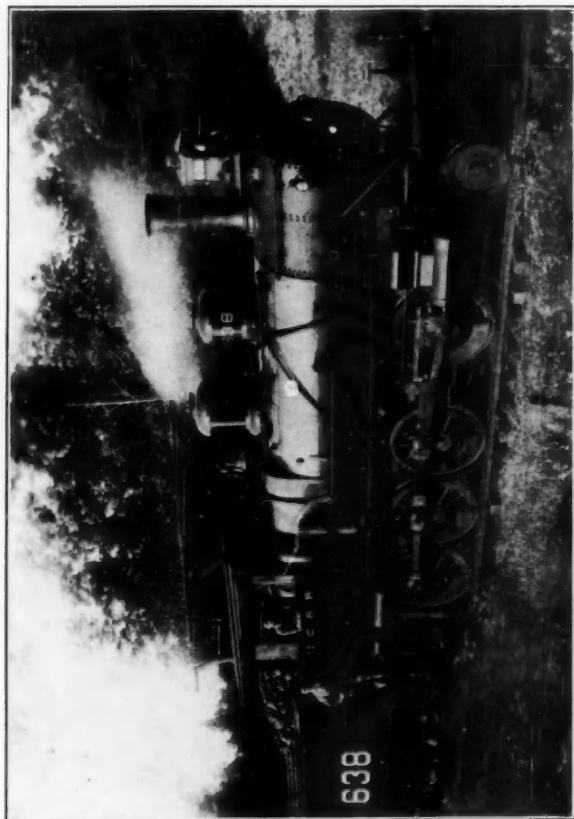
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(Courtesy Illinois Central System)

JOHN LUTHER JONES  
Photograph shows "Casey" Jones in the engineer's seat of Illinois Central locomotive No. 638  
at Hunter's Cut, Mississippi, in 1898.

## CHAPTER VII

### Songs

If poetry is emotion governed by intellect, then it follows as a logical corollary that song, especially pertaining to railroading, is intellect governed by emotion. There is nothing subtle about a track chant or ballad extolling the virtues of a loyal engineer. For sheer unbridled emotion, songs of this character have few equals in the world of music. And yet in this gusto and rampant fervour there is a basic and innate longing for expression which cannot be downed by the niceties of civilization or the shackles of a mechanized environment. In a sense it may be likened to the Freudian *id*, a primitive instinct, half-smothered but never destroyed. In a sense, too, poetry may be regarded as an off-shoot of the *super ego*, a highly refined product of an educated environment. Today we have boxing matches and crude hill-billy airs for the *id*, but for the *super ego*,—art galleries and tooled editions of Miltonic works. On the other hand, because a few hobo songs may descend to the level of the Queensbury rules, or below, it does not follow that all railroad songs are of a sub marginal nature. Indeed some songs (other than railroad) can well be regarded as poetry of the highest rank. Naturally there are innumerable degrees and variations.

Nearly all railroad songs have a kind of frontier spirit, the adventurous, *derring do* atmosphere that links the primitive with the modern—the old with the new. Moreover they are *American*—intensely so! (Fancy an Englishman composing "The Wreck of Old 97"!.) Again they are concerned with feats of strength, endurance, and courage that like as not end in tragedy. The best incentive for a railroad song is a first class wreck in the South or West. A serious accident north of the Mason and Dixon Line and east of the Mississippi will make good headlines, but that is all. Of course there are exceptions; yet in the main, ballads do not originate in this area.

Fully one-half of the popular songs are concerned with trainmen. Other than soldiering there were few occupations more hazardous than railroading, especially in the old link-and-pin days. Another large segment of this industry put to music is the track and maintenance crew. Still others include Negro work songs, spirituals, blues, hobo, company and trolley songs.

Everyone knows "Casey Jones"—

The switchmen knew by the engine's moans,  
That the man at the throttle was Casey Jones.<sup>34</sup>

Why this has become the most famous of all railroad songs is not hard to discern. It has all the attributes discussed in the preceding paragraphs plus a genuine railroad air. Then, too, it is about a real man,—John Luther Jones; a tangible railroad—the Illinois Central; and an actual wreck near Vaughn, Mississippi, taking place on April 30, 1900. Recently there has been a tablet erected to the memory of the

<sup>34</sup> Spaeth, Sigmund, *Read 'Em and Weep*, p. 121.

famous "hogger" by the good folk of Cayce in southwest Kentucky. In this hamlet "Casey" spent his boyhood days, having later moved to a railroad boarding house in Jackson, Mississippi, where he was promptly given the well known sobriquet.<sup>35</sup> But of the gifted Negro engine wiper, Wallace Saunders, who composed the song, there is no photograph, much less a monument, to perpetuate his name.

A close runner-up in this category is "The Wreck of Old 97," said to have yielded its composer, David Graves George, nearly a million dollars in royalties from phonograph records alone. There was considerable litigation over the originator of this popular air but on December 17, 1934, the Supreme Court awarded the honor to George. The tragic ending is typical of all the wreck songs:

He was going down the grade making ninety miles an hour  
When the whistle broke into a scream  
He was found in a wreck with his hand on the throttle  
And scalded to death with the steam.<sup>36</sup>

There are innumerable other songs of this nature such as "The Wreck of the Royal Palm," "Billy Richardson's Last Ride," "The Freight Wreck at Altoona," "The Little Red Caboose Behind the Train," and "The Wreck of the C. & O." Of this group the Altoona selection is probably the only one with its locale in the North—it being on or near the famous Horse Shoe Curve on the Pennsylvania Railroad. But if you sing one song, you sing them all, for they have very much the same beat and rhythm and a common theme, with (like "The Little Red Caboose") a moral coupled on behind.

In the trackmen's group one finds "I've Been Working On the Railroad" second only to "Casey Jones" in popularity. This is a variation of "I've Been Working on the Levee," an Old Dixie song.<sup>37</sup> Other songs of this character may have started with that old section man's classic—"Drill, Ye Tarriers, Drill" written about the time of the building of the first transcontinental railroad. It deals with Irish laborers on the Union Pacific. Another old timer, likewise depicting the colorful Irish trackman, is "Jerry, Go an' Ile that Car"—

Oh, it's "j'int ahead and cinter back,  
An' Jerry, go an' ile that car-r-r!"<sup>38</sup>

In the Negro work songs, that titanic ducky, John Henry, stands out preeminently. He is to the railroader what Paul Bunyan is to the lumberjack. In the song "John Henry" he is beset with competition from a steam drill which later proves to be his undoing.

John Henry sez to his cap'n:  
"Send me a twelve-poun' hammer aroun'.  
A twelve-pound' hammer wid a fo'-foot handle.  
An' I beat yo' steam drill down,  
An' I beat yo' steam drill down."<sup>39</sup>

<sup>35</sup> "Tablet Honors Casey Jones as Railroad Hero," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Vol. XCVII, No. 242, (October 10, 1938), p. 1. (\*Final).

<sup>36</sup> *Wreck of the Old 97*, music and words adapted by David Graves George, Chicago, M. M. Cole Publishing Co., 1937.

<sup>37</sup> Spaeth, Sigmund, ed., *Barber Shop Ballads*, p. 39.

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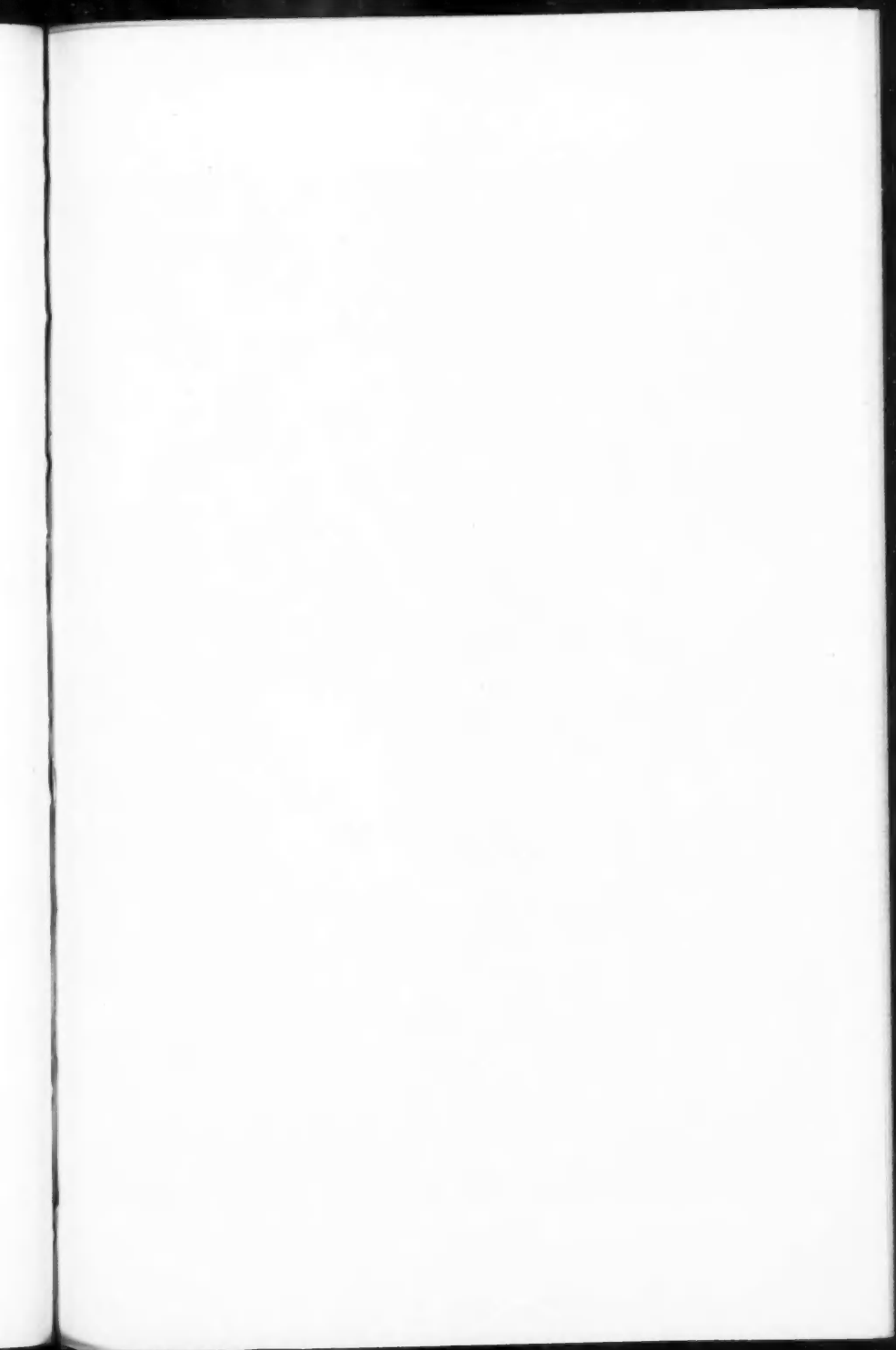


(World Wide)

**MR. AND MRS. DAVID GRAVES GEORGE**

**Shown with notification from the Supreme Court awarding them rights in the royalties earned by "The Wreck of Old 97".**







THE WRECK OF OLD 97

The accident occurred on the Southern Railway near Danville, Virginia, September 27, 1905.

(World Wide)



So famous has John Henry become that two college professors have written books tracing his career as a laborer on the C. & O. to his enshrinement in mythology. There are countless other track chants that fall within this scope. The Negro, as any track foreman will tell you, literally works to music and song. Rid him of this and he becomes discontented, lazy, inefficient, and unwilling to cooperate with his fellow workers.

Somewhat akin to the work songs are the spirituals. The colored man's deep emotional nature and his keen sense of rhythm are brought together in worshipping his Maker. Perhaps the most noted railroad spirituals, if one can call them by that name, are "Dis Train" and "Get On Board." They are, in their own humble way, a counterpart to the Southern white man's revival hymns.

But equally important as the spirituals are the Negro "blues." To be sure, there are blues of the white man. However, the darky songs are more numerous and more frequently associated with railroading. Moreover, they represent a method of escape (either in actuality or vicariously) from tough situations, untoward love affairs, or just the urge to "git going." One and all have a characteristic plaint and lugubrious wail which is instantly recognized no matter where it is heard. Not infrequently the click of the rail joints is attuned to the drawn out moans especially in phonographic recordings. Often, there is a harmonizing of an eerie locomotive whistle which better than anything else accentuates the doleful, far-off atmosphere of these renditions. Typical songs of this nature are "The Freight Train Blues," and a host of individual moans such as the "B & O Blues," "Grand Trunk Blues," "I C Moan Blues," and "L & N Blues." Their number is legion.

Even the lowly hobo, always associated with rail travel after some fashion, has his own ballads. The whole world of trampdom is put to music and song of varying merit. What radio audience has not heard "The Dying Hobo"? Or is there any knight of the road who has not listened to at least three versions of "The Gila Monster Route"? The latter's railroad setting is admirably exemplified in the following lines:

As she hove in sight far up the track,  
She was working steam, with her brake shoes slack.  
She whistled once at the whistling post,  
Then she flitted by like a frightened ghost.<sup>40</sup>

From time to time individual roads had their own songs, many of which are now reposing in the dusty archives of historic carriers. The "good old B & O" is chronologically the best example with its catchy air entitled "Hail! The Baltimore and Ohio."

Hail! the Baltimore and Ohio  
'Tis the road of service fine  
Hail the men whose toil has made it  
A mighty transportation line

<sup>40</sup> Milburn, George, comp., *The Hobo's Hornbook*, p. 161.

For a hundred years it has served us  
Its spirit ne'er can fail  
Hail! the Baltimore and Ohio  
She's the queen of the rail.<sup>41</sup>

And years ago the Chicago, Rock Island and Pacific having become of age, strategically at least, published "The Great Rock Island Route" to commemorate the occasion. But of the Canadian Pacific Railway, an outsider did homage to the carrier in a song called "The Founding of the Famous C P R." Just as the English railways have their highly prized coat of arms so the American trunk lines had their songs although many have long since been forgotten.

Lastly there are, or rather were, the trolley songs. Despite the radio which has brought many an old railroad air back into favor, the tram selections are apparently well beyond resuscitation. The trolley days and ways have gone with the "Saratoga Trunks" and "Gibson Girls" to the scrap book of time and the memory of gray-haired historians. Typical songs of that era include "Let's Go For A Trolley Ride," "The Trolley Party," and "The Trolley Line for Mine." The latter was especially characteristic of a once favorite pastime as can be readily seen by the following lines—

When Summer comes 'round not a joy can be found  
Like a trip on the old trol-ley line.—  
A nick-el or two, for your girl-ie and you  
Makes it ea-sy to cut quite a shine—  
The boys all retreat to the very back seat,  
With their sweet-hearts to fon-dle and spoon—  
And they all speak with pride of the grand trol-ley ride,  
By the sun-light or light of the moon.—<sup>42</sup>

A word or two may be said concerning a few heterogenous songs that escape classification. They range from a financial buccaneer like "Jim Fisk," "who never went back on the poor" to "Railroad Bill"—

Railroad Bill, mighty bad man,  
Shoot the lantern out the brakeman's han',  
Bad Railroad Bill.<sup>43</sup>

Other selections include semi-railroad titles like "The Eastern Train" and "In the Baggage Coach Ahead."

The Hill and Harriman of railroad song collectors are without a doubt Carl Sandburg and John A. Lomax, assisted by his son Alan. In the former's *American Songbag* and the latter's *American Ballads and Folk Songs* there are relatively large sections devoted to the carriers. Additional selections of a popular nature can be found in Frank Shay's *The Pious Friends and Drunken Companions*. Then, too, from the nomadic world of trampdom George Milburn has compiled and annotated his comprehensive volume entitled *The Hobo's Horn Book*. The professors who have made studies of John Henry, elsewhere alluded to in

<sup>41</sup> *Hail the Baltimore & Ohio*, by Walter Goodwin and Margaret Talbott Stevens, New York, Walter Goodwin, Inc., 1927.

<sup>42</sup> *The Trolley Line For Mine*, Words and music by Dave Reed, Jr., N. Y., M. Witmark & Sons, 1906.

<sup>43</sup> Sandburg, Carl, *opp. cit.*, p. 384.

this chapter, are Louis W. Chappell and Guy B. Johnson. However, the best known singer of railroad numbers is probably Vernon Dalhart, who is usually associated with Carson Robinson, a composer of many wreck selections. The two artists have published a booklet called *An Album of Songs* containing several old time rail favorites.

In review we may say that songs—genuine *unchecked* work-a-day songs—give the spontaneous overflow of emotions direct from the man at the throttle or along the track better than almost any other form of expression. Their very simplicity and lack of restraint indicates they are from the heart, devoid of polish and sophistication that arise from culture and learning. Moreover, the railroad selections are distinctly a product of America—her life, traits, and ideals with an atavistic-like throw back to the days of the pioneer.

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- \* — "24 Echoes of the Radio." N. Y., Shapiro, Bernstein & Co., Inc., 1934. 48 p.  
Where Do You Work-a, John? p. 42. M & W.
- \* Shelley, Lee. "Lee Shelley's Collection of Fireside Songs." N. Y., Bob Miller, Inc., 1937. 50 p.  
Little Red Caboose Behind the Train. p. 48. M & W.
- \* Smith, George H., *comp.* "Novelty Album of Old Time Favorites." N. Y., Wm. J. Smith Music Co., 1934. 77 p.  
I've Been Working on the Railroad. p. 45. M & W.
- \* "Songs of the 'Tobacco Tags.'" Raleigh, N. C., Ward's Tobacco Tags, 1935. No pagination.  
That South Bound Train. M & W.
- \* West, C. A., *comp.* "Mountain Melodies." Vaughns Mill, Ky., The author, 1931. 32 p.  
The Lightning Express. p. 19. W.
- \* Wilson, Clyde. "Finest Collection of Cowboy and Mountain Ballads." Chicago, M. M. Cole Publishing Co., 1937. 64 p.  
The East Bound Train. p. 24. M & W.

## Phonograph Records

The list of records, like the songs, is by no means complete. It represents an attempt to enumerate the railroad or semi-railroad airs the author has heard or those which he knows have something to do with railroads. Strictly speaking, however, only about one half of these selections are railroad records and the remainder merely allude to the railway in one way or another. The author would appreciate hearing of additional titles of songs either in sheet music, booklets, books, or phonographic recordings.

All records are 10 inches in diameter unless otherwise noted. They are listed by title, followed by composer in parenthesis if such information is given in the manufacturer's catalogues, then by artist or orchestra; manufacturer; and number of record. The alphabetical arrangement is by title, thence by artist or orchestra and trade name.

Since Melotone and Perfect records correspond in number, etc., only the latter name is given. Frequently a Victor record, for example, is given under a trade name with a different number. A large percentage of these records have been discontinued and several of the manufacturers are no longer in existence. The list is intended to be more of an historic reference of railroad selections irrespective of the date they were recorded or offered for sale. Readers should consult dealers or query manufacturers to see if selections are in stock, for the life of a railroad number is usually very short. Many of the records which are cut out can be had by getting in touch with dealers who specialize in securing old numbers. Several phonographic magazines have advertisements of these dealers.

ABSENT FREIGHT TRAIN BLUES. Alfonce Harris. Vocalion, 02996.  
ALTOONA FREIGHT WRECK. Riley Puckett. Decca, 5455.  
B. & O. BLUES NO. 2. Buddy Moss. Perfect, 0259.  
B. & O. LINE BLUES. Bumble Bee Slim. Decca, 7145.  
BEN DEWBERRY'S FINAL RUN. (Andy Jenkins). Jimmie Rodgers. Victor, 21245.  
BIG RAILROAD BLUES. (Lewis). Cannon's Jug Stompers. Victor, 21351.  
BILLY RICHARDSON'S LAST RIDE. (Robinson). Jeff Calhoun. Radiex, 4226.

BILLY RICHARDSON'S LAST RIDE. Al Craver. Columbia, 15098 D.  
 BLOW YO'R WHISTLE, FREIGHT TRAIN. Delmore Brothers. Blue Bird, B-5925.  
 BLUE RAILROAD TRAIN. Delmore Brothers. Blue Bird, B-5531.  
 BOX CAR BLUES. Maggie Jones. Columbia, 14050 D.  
 BRAKEMAN'S BLUES. Jimmie Rodgers. Montgomery Ward, M-4214.  
 BRAKEMAN'S BLUES. (Rodgers). Jimmie Rodgers. Victor, 21291.  
 BRAKEMAN'S REPLY. Cliff Carlisle. Conqueror, 8097.  
 BRAKEMAN'S REPLY. Cliff Carlisle. Decca, 5379.  
 CASEY JONES. Al Bernard. Brunswick, 178.  
 CASEY JONES. (Seibert-Newton). Jeff Calhoun. Radiex, 4172.  
 CASEY JONES. (Newton). Arthur Collins and Byron Harlan. Columbia, A 907.  
 CASEY JONES. (Seibert-Newton). Vernon Dalhart. Victor, 20502.  
 CASEY JONES. Dixie Demons. Decca, 5140.  
 CASEY JONES. (Newton). Irving and Jack Kaufman. Columbia, A 2809.  
 CASEY JONES. (Newton). Murray and Qt., Victor, 16483.  
 CASEY JONES. Tanner, Skillet-Lickers, Puckett and McMichen. Columbia, 15237 D.  
 CASEY JONES. Fox Trot. Eddie Stone and his Orchestra. Vocalion, 3576.  
 CASEY JONES. Fox Trot. Eddie Stone and his Orchestra. Perfect, 7-07-17.  
 C & A BLUES. Big Bill. Perfect, 6-12-65.  
 C & A TRAIN BLUES. Peetie Wheatstraw. Decca, 7123.  
 DAVIS LIMITED. Jimmie Davis. Blue Bird, B 6249.  
 DEATH OF JOHN HENRY (STEEL DRIVING MAN). Uncle Dave Macon. Brunswick, 112.  
 DEATH OF JOHN HENRY. Welby Toomey. Silvertone, 6005.  
 DE GOSPEL TRAIN AM COMIN'. Harry C. Browne. Columbia, A 2255.  
 DIS TRAIN. Hartman's Tenn. Ramblers. Blue Bird, B-6135.  
 DOWN BY THE RAILROAD TRACK. Frank Crumit and Billie Curtis. Victor, 22423.  
 DOWN BY THE RAILROAD TRACK. Bradley Kincaid. Decca, 12035.  
 DOWN ON THE L N RAILROAD. Stripling Brothers. Decca, 5041.  
 DYING HOBO. Hale-Derry, Jr. Victor, 20796.  
 EAST BOUND TRAIN. McFarland and Gardner. Brunswick, 169.  
 ENGINEER'S CHILD. Vernon Dalhart. Victor, 19983.  
 ENGINEER'S DREAM. Al Craver. Columbia, 15060 D.  
 ENGINEER'S DYING CHILD. Al Craver. Columbia, 15060 D.  
 ENGINEER'S HAND WAS ON THE THROTTLE. (W. R. Hodgin). Willard Hodgins. Conqueror, 7178.  
 ENGINE ONE-FORTY-THREE. (A. P. Carter). The Carter Family. Blue Bird, B 6223.  
 ERIE TRAIN BLUES. Milton Sparks. Blue Bird, B. 6529.  
 EXPRESS TRAIN BLUES. Fox Trot. Fowler's Washboard Wonders. Columbia, 14101 D.  
 FREIGHT TRAIN BLUES. Callahan Brothers. Perfect, 6-09-53.  
 FREIGHT TRAIN BLUES. Red Foley. Conqueror, 8285.  
 FREIGHT TRAIN BLUES. Clara Smith. Columbia, 14041 D.  
 FREIGHT TRAIN WHISTLE BLUES NO. 2. Callahan Brothers. Perfect, 7-06-69.  
 FREIGHT WRECK AT ALTOONA. (Douglas and Robinson). Jeff Calhoun. Grey Gull, 4172.  
 FREIGHT WRECK AT ALTOONA. Al Craver. Columbia, 15065 D.  
 FREIGHT WRECK AT ALTOONA. Vernon Dalhart. Victor, 19999.  
 GEORGIA RAILROAD. Gid Tanner and Ridley Puckett. Columbia, 15019 D.  
 GET YO' TICKET. (Browne). Harry C. Browne. Columbia, A 3386.  
 GOLDSTEIN GOES IN THE RAILROAD BUSINESS. Barney Bernard. Victor, 18029.  
 GRAND TRUNK BLUES. Red Nelson. Decca, 7136.  
 HAIL THE BALTIMORE AND OHIO! B. & O. Centenary Band. The railroad, Baltimore, Md.  
 HOBO BILL'S LAST RIDE. Frank Marvin. Brunswick, 474.

HOBO BILL'S LAST RIDE. (Waldo Lafayette O'Neal). Jimmie Rodgers.  
 Montgomery Ward, M-4210.  
 HOBO BILL'S LAST RIDE. Jimmie Rodgers. Victor, 22421.  
 HOBO JACK'S LAST RIDE. Cliff Carlisle. Conqueror, 8097.  
 HOBO YOU CAN'T RIDE THIS TRAIN. F. T. Armstrong's Orchestra. Victor,  
 24200.  
 HOBO'S MEDITATION. Jimmie Rodgers. Victor, 23711.  
 I BEEN WORKIN' ON THE RAILROAD. Frank Novak and His Rootin' Toot-  
 in' Boys. Perfect, 20731.  
 I HATE THAT TRAIN CALLED THE M & O. Bessie Jackson. Perfect, 6-02-64.  
 I. C. MOAN BLUES. (Whittaker). Tampa Red. Perfect, 7-03-73.  
 IF WE WERE ON OUR HONEYMOON. Railway Duet from "The Doll Girl."  
 (Smith-Kern). Elsie Baker-Frederick Wheeler. Victor, 17436.  
 I'M GONNA RIDE TO HEAVEN ON A STREAMLINE TRAIN. Wilf Carter.  
 Blue Bird, B-5871.  
 I'M GONNA RIDE TO HEAVEN ON A STREAMLINE TRAIN. Wilf Carter.  
 Montgomery Ward, M-4860.  
 IN THE BAGGAGE COACH AHEAD. Vernon Dalhart. Columbia, 15028 D.  
 IN THE BAGGAGE COACH AHEAD. (Davis). Vernon Dalhart. Victor, 19627.  
 IN THE BAGGAGE COACH AHEAD. (Davis). Arthur Fields. Grey Gull, 4090.  
 IN THE BAGGAGE COACH AHEAD. Frank Luther. Decca, 435.  
 IN THE BAGGAGE COACH AHEAD. Dennis O'Leary. Decca, 12023.  
 IN THE BAGGAGE COACH AHEAD. Ernest Thompson. Columbia, 216 D.  
 I'VE BEEN WORKING ON THE RAILROAD; BALTIMORE AND OHIO  
 CENTENARY SONG. (Stevens-Goodwin). B. & O. Glee Club. The railroad,  
 Baltimore, Md.  
 I'VE JUST BEEN A BRAKEMAN. Homer Callahan. Perfect, 6-02-59.  
 I'VE RODE THE SOUTHERN AND THE L. & N. Callahan Brothers. Con-  
 queror, 8557.  
 I'VE RODE THE SOUTHERN AND THE L. & N. Homer Callahan. Perfect,  
 25-10-11.  
 JOHN HENRY. Gibbs and Watson. Silvertone, 3662.  
 JOHN HENRY. Gid Tanner and Ridley Puckett. Columbia, 15019 D.  
 JOHN HENRY. Henry Thomas. Vocalion, A-1094.  
 JOHN HENRY BLUES. Earle Johnson and His Dixie Entertainers. Okeh, 45101.  
 JOHN HENRY (THE STEEL DRIVIN' MAN). Tanner, Skillett-Lickers and  
 Puckett. Columbia, 15142 D.  
 K. C. RAILROAD. Ridley Puckett. Blue Bird, B-5471.  
 K. C. RAILROAD. Ridley Puckett. Montgomery Ward, M-7042.  
 K. C. RAILROAD. Leo Soileau, and His Four Aces. Decca, 5262.  
 L. & N. BLUES. Walter Davis. Blue Bird, B 5143.  
 L. & N. BLUES. Leroy's Buddy. Decca, 7246.  
 L. & N. BLUES. Clara Smith. Columbia, 14073 D.  
 LIGHTNING EXPRESS. Vernon Dalhart. Victor, 19837.  
 LIGHTNING EXPRESS. Ernest Thompson. Columbia, 145 D.  
 LITTLE RED CABOOSE BEHIND THE TRAIN. Bob Miller. Montgomery  
 Ward, M-4337.  
 LONESOME RAILROAD. Tom Darby and Jimmie Tarlton. Columbia, 15375-D.  
 LONGEST TRAIN. Mainer's Mountaineers. Blue Bird, B-6222.  
 LONGEST TRAIN. Mainer's Mountaineers. Montgomery Ward, M-7005.  
 LONGEST TRAIN. Riley Puckett. Decca, 5523.  
 LOST TRAIN BLUES. Arthur Smith. Blue Bird, B-5858.  
 McABEE'S RAILROAD PIECE. (McAbee). Palmer McAbee. Victor, 21352.  
 MISSISSIPPI FREIGHT TRAIN BLUES. Kid Smith Family. Perfect, 21352.  
 MISSISSIPPI FREIGHT TRAIN BLUES. Kid Smith Family. Vocalion, 03415.  
 MYSTERY OF NUMBER FIVE. Jimmie Rodgers. Montgomery Ward, M-4223.  
 MYSTERY OF NUMBER FIVE. Jimmie Rodgers. Victor, 23518.  
 NEW JOHN HENRY BLUES. Shelton Brothers and C. Fox. Decca, 5173.  
 NEW LOST TRAIN BLUES. Mainer's Mountaineers. Blue Bird, B-6224.  
 NEW LOST TRAIN BLUES. Mainer's Mountaineers. Montgomery Ward, M-  
 7003.  
 NEW RIVER TRAIN. Vernon Dalhart. Columbia, 15032 D.

NEW RIVER TRAIN. Kelly Harrell. Victor, 20171.  
 NEW RIVER TRAIN. Hartman's Tennessee Ramblers. Blue Bird, B-6162.  
 NEW RIVER TRAIN. Monroe Brothers. Blue Bird, B-6645.  
 NEW RIVER TRAIN. Texas Rangers. Decca, 5139.  
 NEW RIVER TRAIN. The Westerners. Conqueror, 8204.  
 NINE POUND HAMMER. Al Hopkins and His Buckle Busters. Brunswick, 177.  
 NUMBER III. Mainer's Mountaineers. Blue Bird, B-6224.  
 NUMBER III. Mainer's Mountaineers. Montgomery Ward, M-7003.  
 ON THE GOOD OLD SANTA FE. Mack Brothers. Decca, 5073.  
 PACIFIC 231. (Honneger). Parts 1 and 2. Continental Symphony Orchestra.  
 Victor, 9276 (12 in.)  
 PULLMAN PORTERS ON PARADE. Medley one-step. Victor Band. Victor,  
 17465.  
 PULLMAN'S PORTER'S PARADE. (Abrahams). Al Jolson. Columbia, A 1374.  
 RAILROAD BILL. Ridley Puckett. Columbia, 15040 D.  
 RAILROAD BLUES. Chester Allen and Campbell. Blue Bird, B-6224.  
 RAILROAD BLUES. Fox Trot. (C. Luckeyth Roberts). Benson Orchestra of  
 Chicago. Victor, 18850.  
 RAILROAD BLUES. Daddy John Love. Blue Bird, B-6624.  
 RAILROAD BLUES. Nation's Brothers. Vocalion, O3152.  
 RAILROAD BLUES. Dance Music. Columbia, 2929.  
 RAILROAD RAG. (Bimberg). Arthur Collins. Columbia, A 1059.  
 RAILROAD SECTION GANG (DRILL YE TARRIERS DRILL.). Peerless Qt.  
 Victor, 16727.  
 RAILROAD TRAMP. Walter Morris. Columbia, 15101 D.  
 RUNAWAY TRAIN. Vernon Dalhart. Brunswick, 2911.  
 RUNAWAY TRAIN. Vernon Dalhart. Columbia, 351 D.  
 RUNAWAY TRAIN. Vernon Dalhart. Victor, 19684.  
 RUNAWAY TRAIN BLUES. Bill Cox and Cliff Hobbs. Perfect, 7-11-53.  
 SHE WAVES AS HIS TRAIN PASSES BY. Willard Hodgins. Conqueror, 7178.  
 SOUTHERN CANNON BALL. Jimmie Rodgers and Raymond Hall. Victor,  
 23811.  
 SOUTHERN CASEY JONES. Jesse James. Decca, 7213.  
 SOUTHERN RAILROAD BLUES. Kokomo Arnold. Decca, 7139.  
 THAT RAILROAD RAG. (Vincent-Bimberg). Van Brunt. Victor, 16876.  
 THIS TRAIN. Famous Jubilee Singers. Perfect, 190.  
 TRAIN IMITATIONS AND THE BLUE FOX CHASE. William McCoy. Co-  
 lumbia, 14302 D.  
 TRAIN SONG. Boyd's Cowboy Ramblers. Blue Bird, B-5945.  
 TRAIN SONG. Bill Boyd and His Cowboy Ramblers. Montgomery Ward, M-4905.  
 TRAIN WHISTLE BLUES. Bill Cox and Cliff Hobbs. Perfect, 7-07-67.  
 TRAIN WHISTLE BLUES. Jimmie Rodgers. Columbia, 22379.  
 TRAIN WHISTLE BLUES. Jimmie Rodgers. Montgomery Ward, M-4223.  
 TRAIN WHISTLE BLUES. Jimmie Rodgers. Victor, 22379.  
 TRAINS. Two Parts. Reginald Gardner. Decca, 23022.  
 TRUE AND TREMBLING BRAKEMAN. Bradley Kincaid. Conqueror, 8091.  
 WAITING FOR A TRAIN. Jimmie Rodgers. Victor, V-40014.  
 'WAY OUT THERE. Hall Brothers. Montgomery Ward, M-7237.  
 'WAY OUT THERE. (Nolan). Sons of the Pioneers. Decca, 5013.  
 WESTERN HOBO. Carter Family. Blue Bird, B-6223.  
 WHEN THE MIDNIGHT CHOO CHOO LEAVES FOR ALABAM'. (Irving Ber-  
 lin). Collins-Harlan. Victor, 17246.  
 WHEN THE MIDNIGHT CHOO CHOO LEAVES FOR ALABAM'. (Berlin).  
 Pietro Deiro. Columbia, A 1323.  
 WHEN THE TRAIN COMES ALONG. Uncle Dave Macon and Kirk and Sam  
 McGee. Decca, 5373.  
 WRECK OF OLD NO. 9. Four Aces with Leo Soileau. Decca, 5279.  
 WRECK OF THE C. & O. Charles Lewis Stine. Columbia, 15027 D.  
 WRECK OF THE C. & O. NO. 5. Al Craver. Columbia, 15135 D.  
 WRECK OF THE NO. 52. Cliff Carlisle. Conqueror, 8228.  
 WRECK OF THE NUMBER NINE. (Robinson). Jeff Calhoun. Grey Gull,  
 4172.

WRECK OF THE NUMBER NINE. Al Craver. Columbia, 15121 D.  
 WRECK OF THE NUMBER NINE. Vernon Dalhart. Brunswick, 101.  
 WRECK OF THE OLD 97. Vernon Dalhart. Victor, 19427.  
 WRECK OF THE ROYAL PALM. Vernon Dalhart. Brunswick, 101.  
 WRECK OF THE ROYAL PALM. (Andrew Jenkins). Frank Luther. Grey  
 Gull, 4200.  
 WRECK OF THE ROYAL PALM EXPRESS. Al Craver. Columbia, 15121 D.  
 WRECK ON THE SOUTHERN 97. George Reneau. Vocalion, A 14809.  
 WRECK OF THE SOUTHERN OLD 97. Tanner, Skillet-Lickers, Puckett. Co-  
 lumbia, 15142 D.  
 WRECK OF THE SOUTHERN OLD 97. Ernest Thompson. Columbia, 130 D.  
 WRECK OF THE SOUTHERN OLD 97. Fox Trot. Carl Fenton's Orchestra.  
 Brunswick, 2857.  
 WRECK OF THE 1256. (Williams & Robinson). Jeff Calhoun. Radiex, 4226.  
 WRECK OF THE 1256. Al Craver. Columbia, 15034 D.  
 WRECK OF THE 1256. Vernon Dalhart. Victor, 19812.  
 YODELING THE RAILROAD BLUES. Jess Rodgers. Blue Bird, B-5689.



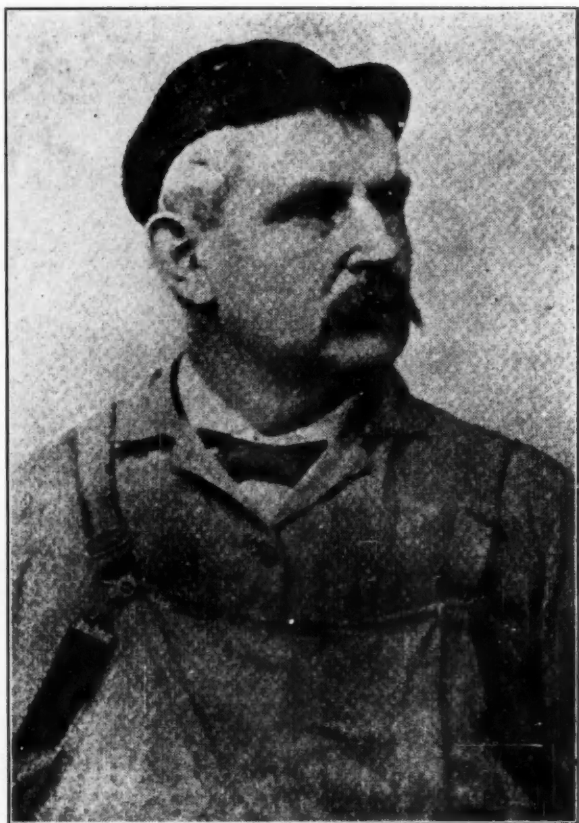
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HERBERT ELLIOTT HAMBLÉN

## CHAPTER VIII

### Biography

In such a dramatic industry as railroading one looks for very positive and decidedly individual traits characteristic of a vocation based on action. As the veteran locomotive engineer who did not mind turning his run over to a younger man, so he could take a rest except in the event of a blizzard—that was a different matter; so the railroad executive takes delight in overcoming natural or man-made obstacles. Or to put it differently: imagine the average official of our present day carriers put back in the beginning of the nineteenth century. Could he be satisfied in the relatively settled East amid the refinements of society, given to philosophizing or writing? Well, such a thing is possible, but more than likely he would be at the frontier, blazing a trail, subduing Indians or hewing trees for a new home site. The trunkline executives are, indeed, almost invariably strong characters, with an unswerving determination plus a dose or over-dose of sturdy individualism.

Most biographies of railroaders made fascinating reading because they are about men who frequently entered the industry in the colorful but dangerous link-and-pin days or shortly thereafter and went "through the mill." Being aggressive individuals who passed through the rough and turbulent years when railroading required an abundance of brawn as well as brain, they are essentially men who do things.

Some of the best biographies are written several years after the death of the men concerned. In this way a broader perspective may be had not only of the executive in question but of the period in which he lived. All too frequently the contemporary biographer assumes the role of a hagiographer or, less frequently, that of a muck raker. Time alone makes for an objective, unbiased view of all things and eliminates unreasonable glorification or malicious slandering.

Probably the best account of an old time railroad official to be found in American literature is Herbert Hamblen's *The General Manager's Story*. In so far as actual experiences and vivid word pictures are concerned, the whole gamut of railroading from trainman to executive is told in one colorful panorama of swift moving events. Hamblen, for fourteen years a locomotive engineer, writes from the inside after the manner of a born narrator. Although the name of the official is not disclosed, the biography is typical of the thousands of railroaders who started out on the line and worked up to positions of leadership and prestige. The book is copiously illustrated by W. D. Stevens, who made as thorough a study of various angles of the industry as do our candid-camera artists of today. It may well be regarded as one of the best sketches, by pen and brush, of railroad men at work that has ever been produced.

Hamblen was born in Ossipee, New Hampshire, December 24, 1849. At an early age, after a meager education, he ran off to sea and became first mate on a sailing vessel. Later he turned to railroading in the capacity of engineman and finally took up the less romantic duties of

stationary engineer until devoting all his time to writing. Under the pen name of Frederick Benton Williams he wrote *On Many Seas*, a story of maritime life. His other books such as *The Red-Shirts*—a romance of the old volunteer fire department—*Tom Benton's Luck*—a yarn of the high seas—and *The Story of a Yankee Boy*—together with the remainder of his works, Hamblen did not write under a *nom de plume*. He also wrote *We Win*, a juvenile tale for boys. Like *The General Manager's Story* it is crammed with genuine railroad atmosphere by one who knew it first hand. Another book—*The Yarn of A Bucko Mate*—opens with a railroad setting although the bulk of the volume is given over to recounting life at sea, as are many of his stories. Hamblen made his home at Woodhaven, Long Island.<sup>44</sup>

An excellent composite biography of the builders of the Central Pacific is given in *The Big Four*, by Oscar Lewis. The author, a well-known Californian writer and historian, endeavors to portray the striking quartet in a thorough, disinterested manner. While a good portion of the work centers around the construction of the railroad, each of the four—Leland Stanford, Charles Crocker, Mark Hopkins, and Collis P. Huntington,—plus a fifth, Theodore D. Judah, the “forgotten man,” is given in terms of dynamic human personalities. The book shows much painstaking research and good integration.

Oscar Lewis is a native of California by birth, environment and choice. Born in San Francisco, May 5, 1893, he received his college education at the University of California. It was, however, in high school that he first started to write and had several of his short stories appear in print. During the World War Lewis served in the Ambulance Corps in France but returned to the “Golden State” when the conflict ended. As secretary of the Book Club of California he continued his interest in literature and kept on writing. Apart from his railroad opus he has three other books to his credit—*Hearne and His Biographers* (1930), *The Origin of the Celebrated Jumping Frog of Calaveras County* (1931), and *A History of San Francisco* (1932). *The Big Four* is the result of six years of research and labor on one of the most dramatic episodes in the annals of the West. Oscar Lewis resides in San Francisco.<sup>45</sup>

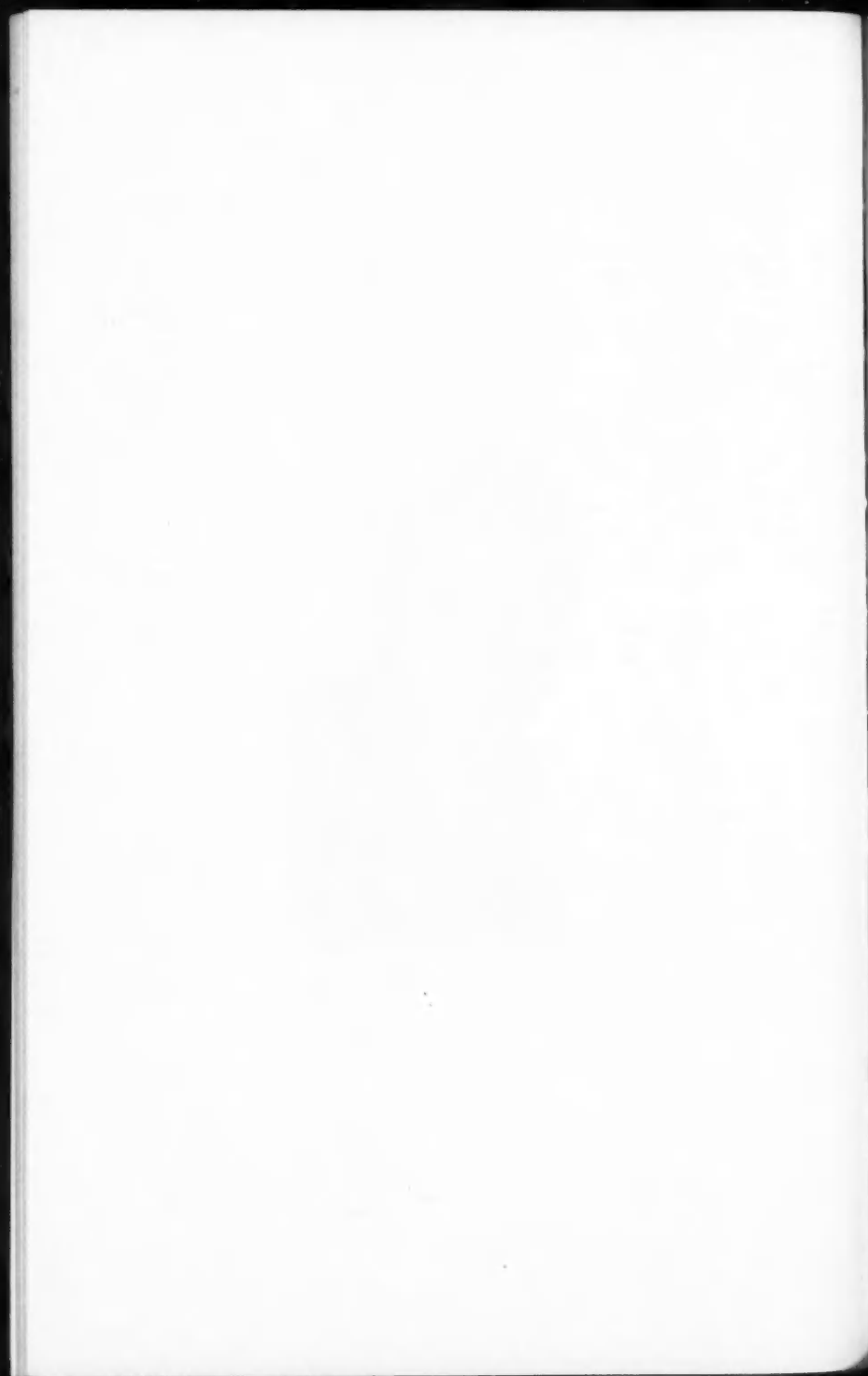
If Oscar Lewis' *The Big Four* is highly critical then Edward Hungerford's *Daniel Willard Rides the Line* is highly laudatory. Human nature being what it is renders many biographies of this sort almost useless, others of passing interest, and a chosen few of considerable merit. And “Uncle Dan” is by common consent of all those who know him, worked for him, or had business dealings with him, worthy of merit, which is a vindication, if there ever was one, for Hungerford's book. The aged head of the Baltimore and Ohio is probably the finest type of executive at the helm of any trunk line in America today. He

<sup>44</sup> The last biographical sketch of Hamblen was given in *Who's Who in America*, Vol. XI, (1910-11). The subsequent issue refers back to Vol. VI. It is probable that he died during 1910 or 1911, although there is no reference to his death in the later editions of *Who's Who*. A letter to his Woodhaven address was returned and marked “unknown.”

<sup>45</sup> Lewis, Oscar, “Men Against Mountains,” *Atlantic Monthly*, Vol. 161, No. 4, (April 1938), p. 556.



OSCAR LEWIS



is, to quote Hungerford, "The Master of the Railroad" in its broadest meaning.

A recent book somewhat akin to Hamblen's biography, although written in a different style, is Chauncey Del French's *Railroadman*. The author, writing about his father an itinerant western railway employee, has lost none of the flavor of the old time "boomer" in its telling. A mere recital of the positions he held—baggage-man, brakeman, conductor, fireman, engineer, telegraph operator, switchman—is indicative of the comprehensive scope and variety of events put between two covers. Indeed, a volume could be written on each chapter which, as it is, has enough action and vitality packed on every page to satisfy the most exacting railfan.

When discussing individual biographies one naturally turns to the big men of railroading—the tycoons dominating the avenues of transportation in their day. Both Joseph G. Pyle's *Life of James J. Hill* and George Kennan's *E. H. Harriman* are excellent studies of the foremost transportation giants at the turn of the century. A more recent book about the little genius of the Union Pacific is Hamilton J. Eckenrode and Pocahontas W. Edmund's *E. H. Harriman*, published in 1933.

But is there more interesting reading in the pages of biography than the freebooters of finance who looted the roads to line their own pockets? Such pseudo—railroaders as the flamboyant Col. James Fisk, Jr., described in Robert H. Fuller's *Jubilee Jim*, the pious Uncle Dan'l in Bouck White's *The Book of Daniel Drew*, and crafty Jay Gould depicted in Robert I. Warshow's biography of the same name, are typical, too much so, of the decadence of sound business principles in the 'sixties. In short, as any book-dealer is aware, the life of a good, upright citizen, unless written by an extremely capable biographer, may be a "plug" slated for the next overstock sale, whereas the narrative of the exploits of a man of a piratical temperament has the elements of a potential best seller.

Among other biographies of notable railroaders—legitimate engineers and executives—are J. R. Perkins' *Trails, Rails and War*, the life of General Grenville M. Dodge; William Barclay Parsons' *An American Engineer in China*, an autobiographical sketch; and Arthur D. H. Smith's dramatic story of *Commodore Vanderbilt*, the guiding hand of the powerful New York Central. Equally interesting is John W. Starr's *Lincoln and the Railroads*, disclosing the little known but important role the Great Emancipator played for the Illinois Central and the Chicago, Rock Island, and Pacific Railroads. A recent publication of a veteran western railroad builder is James H. Kyner's recollections entitled *End of Track*. And Canada, too, has its chapters of noted men presented in J. L. Burpee's *Sanford Fleming, Empire Builder*, Beckles Willson's *The Life of Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal*, Walter Vaughan's *The Life and Work of Sir William Van Horne* and David B. Hanna's autobiography entitled *Trains of Recollection*.

Or turning to industries closely affiliated with railroads, we find that the historic Baldwin Locomotive Works is represented by its stalwart chairman Samuel M. Vauclain in his autobiography *Steaming*

*Up* (in collaboration with Earl Chapin May). So, too, is the great Westinghouse Air Brake Company symbolized in the biography of its founder entitled *A Life of George Westinghouse*, by Henry G. Prout. Again, the name of Pullman is synonymous with comfort and luxury in railway travel, and Joseph Husband has sketched the life of the well-known coach builder in *The Story of the Pullman Car*. Even the railroad supply business is pictured, after a fashion, in Parker Morell's scintillating biography of that prince of all good fellows, James Buchanan Brady, aptly called *Diamond Jim*.

The mention of capital brings to mind Wall Street, and the Street at one time was John Pierpont Morgan. Morgan's reorganizing and control of railroads is traced in Carl Hovey's *The Life Story of J. Pierpont Morgan*, John K. Winkler's *Morgan the Magnificent*, and Lewis Corey's *The House of Morgan*. Nor can capital get along without labor any more than American Railway Union some forty odd years ago could function without Debs as McAlister Coleman points out in his fascinating biography *Eugene V. Debs*. In spite of the fact that "Gene" was usually on the wrong side of the fence, his sincerity, honesty and untiring zeal for the cause he espoused won him many friends.

Although there are countless books about railroad executives, there are comparatively few volumes by them. The average official has little time and probably still less patience to record what he *has done*; yet he takes immense pride in the day-to-day progress of what he *is doing* to make his railroad a useful and efficient carrier. It goes without saying that historians are seldom recruited from the ranks of trunk-line executives. But there are a few volumes written by officials or near officials which deserve mention. One of these is James O. Fagan's *The Autobiography of An Individualist*, setting forth the ideals and philosophy of a signalman. Two more are *The Diary of a Round House Foreman*, by Thomas S. Reilly, and *Letters from an Old Railway Official to His Son A Division Superintendent*, being the epistles of Charles DeLano Hine. The former contains the whimsical recordings direct from the engine house whereas the latter are some wise and timely observations on railroad operation and human nature.

In passing, a word or two might be added about the unwanted patrons of the rail—the 'boes. In Jim Tully's *Beggars of Life* they speak their parts, frankly and almost brutally. Something of the problem to keep vagrants in check may be gleaned from the *Notes of An Itinerant Policeman*, written by Josiah Flynt Willard in the discreet language of a pre-realistic era.

Apart from biographical fiction there seems to be no life or letters of a street railway magnate. One can, however, get some scattered observations of trolley operation with franchise squabbles and political rows thrown in for good measure in *My Story*, by Tom L. Johnson, one time mayor of Cleveland and rabid three-cent-fare advocate; *Forty Years of It*, the informal autobiography of Toledo's humanitarian mayor and former ambassador to Belgium, the late Brand Whitlock; and *My Own Story*, by the famous San Francisco newspaper editor and reformer, Fremont Older. Likewise in William Gibbs McAdoo's



*Crowded Years* the recent senator from California tell of his unremunerative experiences in electrifying the Knoxville horse car lines.

Since the railway had its inception in England, it is only fitting to mention some of the outstanding biographies of the British Empire. Foremost among these are Samuel Smiles' classic *The Life of George Stephenson and of His Son Robert Stephenson* and *The Diaries of Edward Pease* relating how the wealthy Quaker manufacturer had the foresight and courage to aid in Stephenson's pioneer undertakings. To this one might add *The Life of Isambard Kingdom Brunel, Civil Engineer* of the Great Western Railway, by Isambard Brunel, or the records of its equally interesting locomotive superintendent as given in the *Diaries of Sir Daniel Gooch, Baronet*. And one of the few autobiographies of British transportation executives is Joseph Tatlow's *Fifty Years of Railway Life in England, Scotland and Ireland*. But probably the most fascinating and readable of current biographies is Richard S. Lambert's book on George Hudson entitled *The Railway King*.

The achievements of the English, however, cover not only the vast and disconnected portions of the Empire but many other countries as well. For example in *The Memoirs of Sir Edward Blunt* a large portion of the volume is devoted to Blunt's railway work in France. Yet for cosmopolitan rail construction is there anyone who can rival Thomas Brassey? In *Sir Arthur Helps' Life and Labours of Mr. Brassey* there are chapters describing his contracts in England, France, Spain, Italy, Denmark, Canada, India, Australia and parts of South America.

Then, of course, there is Howard Hensman's *Cecil Rhodes*, which has a chapter or two on the Empire Builders projected "all-red" railway line to connect Cape Town with Egypt and the Mediterranean. And in *The Chronicles of a Contractor* George Rauling recounts his experiences in African railway building. To this can be added Victor Bayley's *Nine-Fifteen from Victoria*, a vivid autobiography of a contractor in a totally different part of Great Britain—teeming India. Also in the *Permanent Way Through the Khyber* he tells of the hardships in rail construction in hostile Afghanistan.

Although most of the literature of Latin America is in Spanish, there is an English translation of Juan Bautista Alberdi's—*The Life and Industrial Labors of William Wheelwright in South America*—describing the building of the pioneer Trans Andian Railway in Argentina. Wheelwright, a citizen of the United States, went to the other side of the equator to achieve fame and fortune.

In summarizing, we find that railroad biographies provide an excellent study of the character, philosophy and ideals of the men who build up nations, particularly the United States. To quote Macaulay, "history is the essence of innumerable biographies"; hence a recital of their lives is, ipso facto, a chronicle of the events and circumstances in which they lived. Then, too, such recitals are a vindication of the American spirit of democracy—especially the philosophy of the common man who believes that success need not have its origin in wealth or social advantages.

## Bibliography of the Lives and Letters of Railroad Men

This list does not include sketches of railroad men contained in books giving a number of short biographies. There are, however, in *The Makers of Canada*, a series of twelve volumes edited by William Lawson Grant and published by the Oxford University Press, New York, several accounts of railroad builders in the Dominion. Likewise in Matthew Josephson's *The Robber Barons* there are numerous brief sketches of railroad officials in the United States. The latter is a 474 page book published by Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, in 1934, and reprinted in 1936. The author hopes, at some future date, to compile a list of these short bibliographical sketches and would appreciate hearing of additional titles.

The present bibliography not only includes railroad men but those unofficially associated with the carriers such as a veteran English railway-book-stall operator, a former hobo, etc. The birth and death are given if indicated on the Library of Congress cards. Notes and explanation of symbols will be found on page 15.

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CHRISTOPHER DARLINGTON MORLEY  
Photographed Wearing an Engineman's Hat.

## CHAPTER IX

### Essays

The essay, like a good poem, is something to be digested and enjoyed in an unhurried manner. It is the aristocrat of writings, appealing to those of a reflective and cultural mind. Railroad essays, in common with those of other subjects, may be formal, didactic and somewhat objective or, on the other hand, subjective, informal, and often whimsical. A large portion of the so-called "literary" type falls in the latter category being friendly and spontaneous yet unconsciously packed with mellow wisdom. Due to the very nature of this branch of literature it is apparent that the older nations steeped in centuries of learning and culture would necessarily have a larger proportion of outstanding essayists. There are far more British than American works in this scope read in the United States and circulated abroad. Yet for quality and quantity the foremost railroad essayist of today is that versatile American—Christopher Darlington Morley.

"Kit" or "Chris" Morley, as he is often called, was born of English parents in Haverford, Pennsylvania, May 5, 1890. His father, Dr. Frank Morley, a mathematician of note, was a graduate of Cambridge and for many years professor of mathematics at Haverford College.<sup>46</sup> Indeed, Christopher Morley is prone to think of America and England as two halves of the same idea and speaks of his youth as "an Anglo-American capsule." Haverford for many years made it a practice of having one or more Englishmen on its faculty in consonance with the Quaker principle of promoting international good will. Morley lived on its sylvan campus until 1900 when his father accepted the chair of mathematics at Johns Hopkins. But young Christopher was destined to return to the Main Line and graduate from Haverford in 1910.<sup>47</sup> The same year his educational rapprochement with England became further strengthened when as a representative from Maryland he was awarded the Rhodes Scholarship to Oxford. In 1913 Morley returned to America and for many years was associated with the editorial department of Doubleday, Doran and Company.<sup>48</sup> He is at present living in Roslyn, New York, which is situated on the Long Island Railroad, for references to that busy commuter's road are sprinkled throughout many of his essays.

To enumerate all of Morley's works would be like starting a telephone directory of one person with different addresses yet under the same exchange or imprint. But that is characteristic of Morley, for his writings are addressed to a wide range of people in all walks of life. Going up Fiction Avenue, one cannot help observing his more popular landmarks such as *The Haunted Bookshop*, *Parnassus on Wheels* and *Where the Blue Begins*. Or walking down the wide Essay Boulevard such homes as *Streamlines*, *Shandygaff*, *Off the Deep End* and many others all packed with an assortment of modern, Victorian

<sup>46</sup> Christopher Morley—A Biographical Sketch. p. 3

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

and pre-Victorian furniture. Likewise as one tours the cobbled thoroughfare of Columnist Road he observes his little brick home *Travels in Philadelphia* contrasted with the sparsely populated region of Elysian Drive, which contains the variegated architecture of his bluntly named structure *Poems*. Even the booky Thespian Way reveals that trim cottage—*One Act Plays*. But for a reflection of Morley's life there is nothing which can take the place of his friendly homestead *John Mistletoe* on the mirror-like Autobiographical Highway hard by a four-tracked railroad. In short, Christopher Morley does not limit himself to any one type of writing nor does he narrow his scope to a limited range of subjects. His essays contain, for example, such incongruous topics as safety pins, doors, prayer books, and locomotives.

Although to most readers Kipling's lines on romance and the nine-fifteen are just another poem, an interesting point of view, to Morley commuting is almost like a religion. It may be "The Paoli Local" on the Pennsylvania's wealthy Main Line, the 8:13 from Wynecote (called Marathon in *Shandygaff*, *Mince Pie*, etc.) on the relatively small but busy Reading Railway, or any number of commuter trains catapulting out of the tunnels of Pennsylvania Station to the crowded Long Island Railroad like buckshot spraying insular New York; yet it is all sandwiched in his essays in one place or another. Nor does Morley forget the two patricians of the rail—the "Broadway Limited" and "The Century." In like measure Philadelphia's venerated "Broad Street Station," the pride of the Pennsylvania, and Daniel Willard's B. & O. (in the essay "On the Way to Baltimore") receive their homage as only Morley can give it. And in one of his longer essays called "Notes With a Yellow Pen" there is a vivid account of his trip over the Chicago and North Western-Union Pacific route to the West coast. Of the same vein is his "Adventures In the Middle West" with its doggerel:

We ride the old Rock Island  
That came from Denver's highland  
The rockety Rock Island  
That rolls through loway.<sup>49</sup>

Even the railways abroad are the subjects of Morley's pen, especially the "Chaix," a French publication similar to the "Bradshaw" in Great Britain or the "Official Guide" in the United States, described in "The Works of M. Chaix." A railroad enthusiast might wish Morley had these little gems in one volume and stocked the Union News kiosks in every station throughout the land. What could be more pleasing than to read such a collection in a day coach, trolley, subway, "L," or best of all, comfortably reclining in the luxuriant opulence of a Pullman car.

Should Morley ever chance to read Gilbert Oliver Thomas' essays, he would at once explain "hail *kinsprit*," for the latter insofar as railway leanings go is the Anglicized half of the same idea. This prominent English essayist and poet was born in Leicester, July 10, 1891, and educated at the Wyggeston School in the same city, and at Leys, Cam-

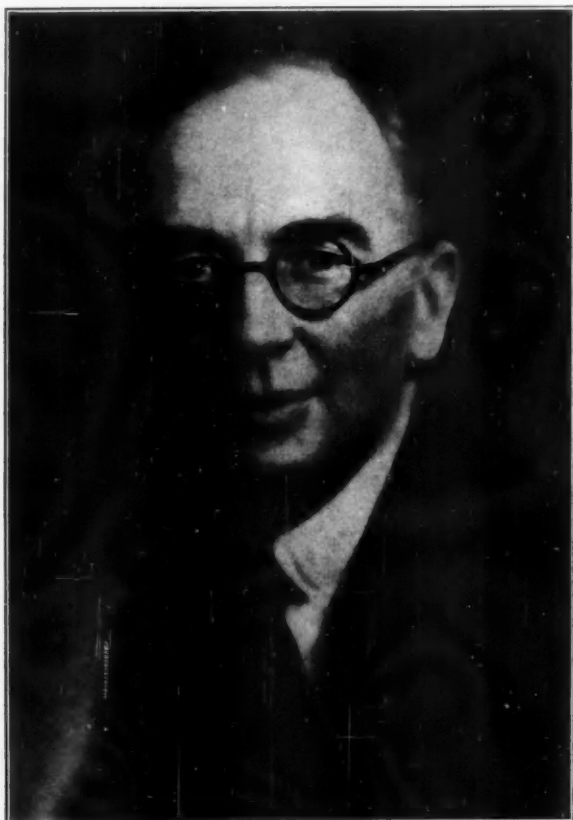
<sup>49</sup> Morley, Christopher D., *Christopher Morley's Briefcase*, p. 26-27.



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GILBERT OLIVER THOMAS

bridge. Like Morley he joined the editorial staff of a well known publishing house—Chapman & Hall—in 1910, and remained with them for four years. Thomas also edited *The Venturer* from 1919 to 1921. He has written seven books of verse including *The Voice of Peace* (1914) and *Towards the Dawn* (1918) besides several volumes of essays as *The Grapes and the Thorns: Thoughts in Wartime*, *Things Big and Little*, *Sparks from the Fire*, *Calm Weather* and a critical study of *John Masefield*. Not content with writing about the Iron Horse and riding on trains, Thomas makes model railways his hobby along with music and the study of religion. Indeed he avers, "I am prouder of my own model Great Western system that I ever have been of any literary work I have produced."<sup>50</sup> Gilbert Thomas resides in Harpenden, Herts.

Thomas writes on many phases of the iron way, but being a man of simple tastes and plain living he is at his best when describing humble branch line trains and light railways. The short line, so dear to the heart of American railfans becomes in the British Isles what is termed a light railway. And in "A Corner of Essex" he tells about a trip on just such a line, even to the shunting of wagons (freight cars) and loading of parcels. There are few mixed trains and grade crossings in the whole of England; yet oddly enough they are combined in the little Essex road only forty miles from London.

In "Cross-Country Journeys" the essayist bemoans the passing of the "fussy" locals in favor of smart, well appointed express trains. This naturally would presuppose Thomas has written about the days of his youth when there were many individual roads and each in turn was highly individualistic. And this he does in an essay called "On A Certain Town," which is, of course, Leicester. From the rainbow-like assortment of colors exemplified in the rolling stock to the basic differences of locomotive design, there was romance a-plenty for the youth. A somewhat different essay is "On Railways and Theology" in which he discusses in one breath, as it were, the virtues of the permanent and spiritual ways. And lest he appear bigoted on the Iron Horse he has written a delightful little piece on a tramway entitled "The Motorman."

Returning to American letters, one is surprised to find how few noteworthy essays are written about railroads in this country. But certainly nature lovers and all those who appreciate good literature are aware of Thoreau's chapter on "Sounds" in *Walden* and its references to the trains of the old Fitchburg Railroad thundering by. Then after a hiatus of some fifty years William Dean Howells wrote an account of the "Comparative Luxuries of Travel." Continental trains, it appears, come out second best in Howells' estimation. Other contemporary essays include Joyce Kilmer's selection entitled "Daily Traveling" in which he pictures commuting as more of a diurnal adventure than an ordeal. One might also mention Henry T. Parker's account of traveling on a rural Austrian narrow gage line in the essay called "Excursion" in *Once And For All*, compiled by David T. W.

<sup>50</sup> "Railways and the Young," *Manchester Guardian*, No. 28, 669, (August 9, 1938), p. 18. (City edition.)

McCord. Then there is Stephen Crane with his "Scotch Express," a really good description of an English train from the pen of an American. A selection especially designed for juvenile readers is Cleveland Moffett's "The Locomotive Engineer" incorporated in his *Careers of Danger and Daring and Story Essays*, edited by Harriet L. McClay and Helen Judson.

It is a rare person who has the precise, formula-like mind of the technician combined with the flexible and imaginative qualities of a good writer. But Eric Hodgkin's description of "The Subway" in *Essays On Science and Engineering*, edited by Franz Montgomery and Luther N. Becklund, commands the respect of the engineering realist and the literary romanticist. Incidentally, Joyce Kilmer has also written, in more of a familiar-essay-style, about the New York subways in his "The Great Nickel Adventure," whereas Robert Cortes Holliday in "Riding in Cars" is concerned with electric railway travel in general.

Unlike the paucity of American essays on the general subject of railroads, the pages of English literature are replete with varied accounts of this mode of transportation. Where save in Great Britain would a large book concern have the temerity to publish such a volume as James Scott's *Railway Romance and Other Essays*, and expect to make it pay? Yet this interesting work chiefly devoted to the carriers is probably the only book of its kind and apparently has yielded a profit despite the limited appeal of essays in general and the railway essay in particular.

Like everything else the iron way has its pros and cons. Chief among those who ardently dislike the railway and all its accessories was John Ruskin. In his voluminous writings there are countless allusions to his inability to reconcile the belching steam engine with the charm of rural England. Nowhere is this brought out more clearly than in Ruskin's bitter protest against "The Extension of Railways In the Lake District" contained in Volume 34 of his copious works or in *A Book of English Essays 1600-1900* compiled by Stanley V. Makower and Basil H. Blackwell. Of present day writers Osbert Sitwell shares this distaste, especially for traveling by rail as evinced in his essay "By Train."

For every writer who dislikes the permanent way there are a score who either like it *in toto* or enjoy certain aspects of it. A. A. Milne, especially, tells of his delight in this mode of transportation in "A Train of Thought." Other distinguished essayists such as G. K. Chesterton with his "The Secret of a Train" and "The Prehistoric Railway Station"; Hilaire Belloc's "On Conversation in Trains"; and E. V. Lucas' account of a petty accident in "Off the Line" bespeak the many references to railways in good literature. And from the many volumes of Robert Lynd one may find his essay called "Trains" commemorating the 100th anniversary of the Stockton and Darlington Railway, along with "Railway Stations I Have Loved" and the hypercritical selection "In the Train." Nor can one easily forget H. G. Wells' didactic "Locomotion In the Twentieth Century"—a discussion of the evolution of the steam engine, found in *Modern Essays and Stories*, edited by Frederick H. Law. For those who like jerkwater

roads Robert B. Cunninghame Graham's "The Stationmaster's Horse" gives an account of lackadaisical railroading in Paraguay. These are only a few of the English *litterateurs* who have given the permanent way some thought and time and wordage.

Of the few foreign railway essays which have been translated, probably the late Karel Capek's selection entitled "Railway Stations" in *Intimate Things* is the best known. It is about the rural stations in his native land Czechoslovakia.

So much for steam but are there not some creditable pieces on the electric railway? Indeed, there are! Else for what reason should J. B. Morton's delightful selection on "The Old Trams" be reprinted and re-read by thousands in *Essays of the Year 1930-31*, compiled by F. J. H. Darton. This work first appeared in *The Spectator*, an English magazine devoted almost exclusively to essays (which, by the way, has no counterpart in America), concerning itself with the proposed abolition of tramways in an Irish town. Because of a series of eleventh hour postponements, the scrapping fails to materialize, at least for the time being, and the old street cars continue to trundle along as they have been doing for many a decade. As yet the British have no organization for trolley enthusiasts and historians such as our Electric Railroaders' Association but they *do* have the interest which may be readily seen by the following editorial in an English trade journal:

A columnist in the Irish News recently protested that it was impossible for him to mention trams in his column without being flooded with correspondence. From the general tone, he says, one would suspect the tram of accompanying a position of pre-eminence in civic affairs. Metropolitan communities seem universally inclined to suffer from "trammania."<sup>51</sup>

Another essay on mass transportation vehicles in the British Isles is J. B. Priestley's "Man Underground"—some subterranean reflections on traveling via the tubes.

In brief we may say it is apparent that railway essays, along with essays in general, are more numerous in England and other continental countries than in America because of the Old World's long cultural heritage. And yet no European can rival for gross output and thorough going railroad atmosphere the essays of Christopher Morley. There are other essayists in the United States who write sparingly on the carriers, but for the most part it is a one-man show conducted by a past master who is mellowed in wisdom if not in age. On the other hand, while the English writers are plentiful in the aggregate, there are few specialists, barring Gilbert Thomas and possibly one or two others, who consistently write about the permanent way.

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<sup>51</sup> "Trams and the Public," *The Transport World*, Vol. LXXXIV, No. 2693, (October 13, 1938), p. 193.

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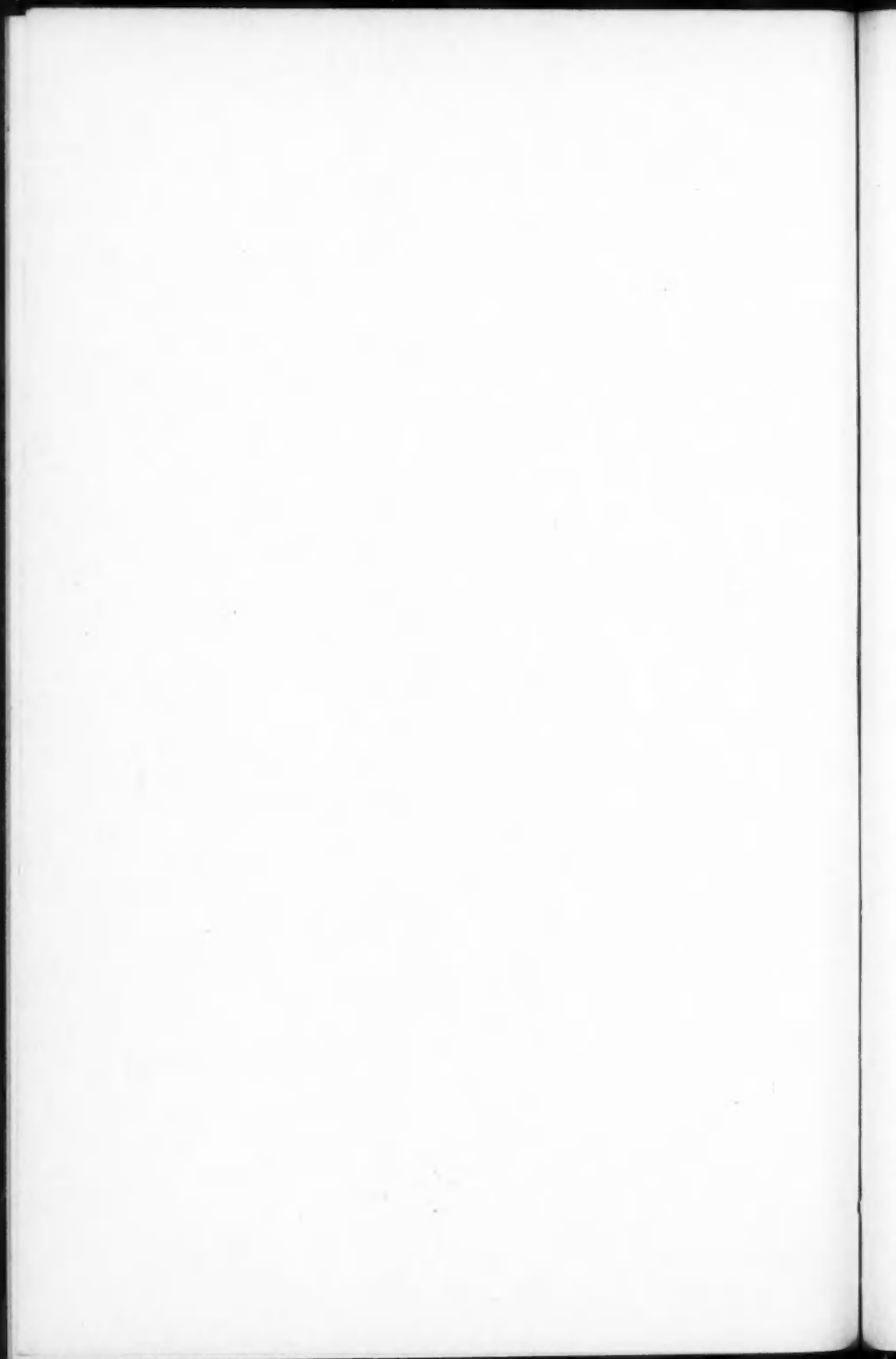
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## CHAPTER X

### Travel

The influence of the railroad on travel literature easily overshadows its modest contribution to the other divisions of letters. It has been by far the strongest force in popularizing descriptive matter for tourists throughout the nation. The reason for this is obvious: before the advent of the locomotive, transportation on land was limited to the strength and speed (or lack of speed) of animal power. And travel books plodded along in a style befitting the leisurely progress of stage coach and carriage. Tourists as we know them today were comparatively few then; hence the need for guide books was not great. But the coming of the railroad changed all this and did it almost overnight. Indeed, the old time traveler's handbook went out with the puff of the locomotive never to return.

During the early part of the twentieth century tourist literature had, thanks to the Iron Horse, come into its own with vengeance. Books, pamphlets, leaflets, and other descriptive publications increased like spectators at a country station before the arrival of a streamlined train on its maiden run. One can truthfully say that in the beginning of the nineteenth century works of this type could be expressed in pounds whereas a hundred years later it should be reckoned in tons. Moreover, each road vied with the other in producing the most ornate booklets fortified with a barrage of superlatives and greatly inflated style. But there was also an abundance of good sound writing—real literary monuments in the ever-changing field of travel.

Granted, then, a by-product of the railroad was its ability to enhance interest in travel writings and at the same time liberate them from the matrix-like style of other days, but what of today? Are the bus and airplane, combined with city, state and national tourist agencies, bent on out-publicizing the iron way? In a few isolated cases this may be true; yet in most instances they supplement the carriers in their effort to stimulate traffic, which like the crest of a huge wave carries them all toward the goal of making the public travel-minded. And the crowded highways have in turn created the "off the beaten track," "rail rambles" and other unusual kinds of scenic excursions. This latest American form of recreation has its essence in meandering branch lines, short line railroads, and out-of-the-way spots in general. What does it matter if passengers have to remove rotted telegraph poles from the track or assist in chasing cattle from the right of way? What does it matter if regular passenger service has been discontinued, seven, eight, or ten years ago? "So much the better," reply the Rousseaus of the rail. A rusty rail becomes a rustic trail. Our railroads are learning to capitalize on the rugged charm of their almost moribund secondary lines. More than one well worded brief for abandonment prepared for the Interstate Commerce Commission has been rescinded or held in abeyance as long Sunday excursions ply over the line in

question. Heretofore the railroad train has been regarded as a means of reaching one's destination, quickly, comfortably and safely, and not for general sight-seeing purposes. Now, however, the carriers enter the autoist's domain, making a success of it. Times do change in the most unexpected manner.

So much for rail cruises, but let us leave the right of way and return to books and authors. Of all travel writers, Edward Hungerford can observe more of railroads, and what is of singular importance, describe them with such skill that even John Ruskin would be pleased. As a boy Hungerford showed a decided interest in journalism and transportation. At ten he was on the "staff" of the *Boy's Friend*, an eight page publication written and illustrated in lead pencil and multi-graphed with the aid of carbon paper.<sup>52</sup> When not in the "press room," he could usually be found at the junction watching Jeff Wells' Number Forty-Four haul the Cape Vincent local. What was more logical than to combine the two interests and write about the steel highway?<sup>53</sup> This he did and in so doing became the foremost railroad publicist of our time.

Edward Hungerford was born in Dexter, New York, December 21, 1875. Educated at the Williston Seminary, Easthampton, Massachusetts, and Syracuse University, he was to receive many years later as lasting tribute the honorary degree of LL.D. from St. Lawrence University in his own "North Country." His formal introduction to newspaper work, began in 1896 as a reporter for the *Rochester Herald*. Later he was employed in the same capacity by the New York *Sun* until he edited the Glen Falls (New York) *Times* in 1904. With this broad background in journalism, Hungerford entered the field of transportation as press representative for the Brooklyn Rapid Transit Company in the same year. Since then he has successively held positions as advertising manager for Wells-Fargo & Company, Centenary Director of the Baltimore and Ohio, and assistant vice president of the New York Central. Apart from his many books, Hungerford is known as a pageant director of the first order. Starting with the "Fair of the Iron Horse," (October 1927), he also produced "Wings of a Century" at the Century of Progress Exposition (1933), and is now in charge of the spectacular "Railroads On Parade" at the New York World's Fair.

Hungerford is a prolific author, having written a score of books chiefly on railroads. Among them are *The Modern Railroad* (1911), *Our Railroads Tomorrow* (1922), *The Story of the Rome, Watertown and Ogdensburg Railroad* (1922), *The Story of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad* (1928), and *Men and Iron* (1939). He has widely contributed to numerous magazines.

In the travel volume—*Pathway of Empire*—Hungerford tells of his odyssey through New York State in an automobile thus enabling him to reach obscure points inaccessible by rail. Regardless of this he sees much more pertaining to railroads than the average person who

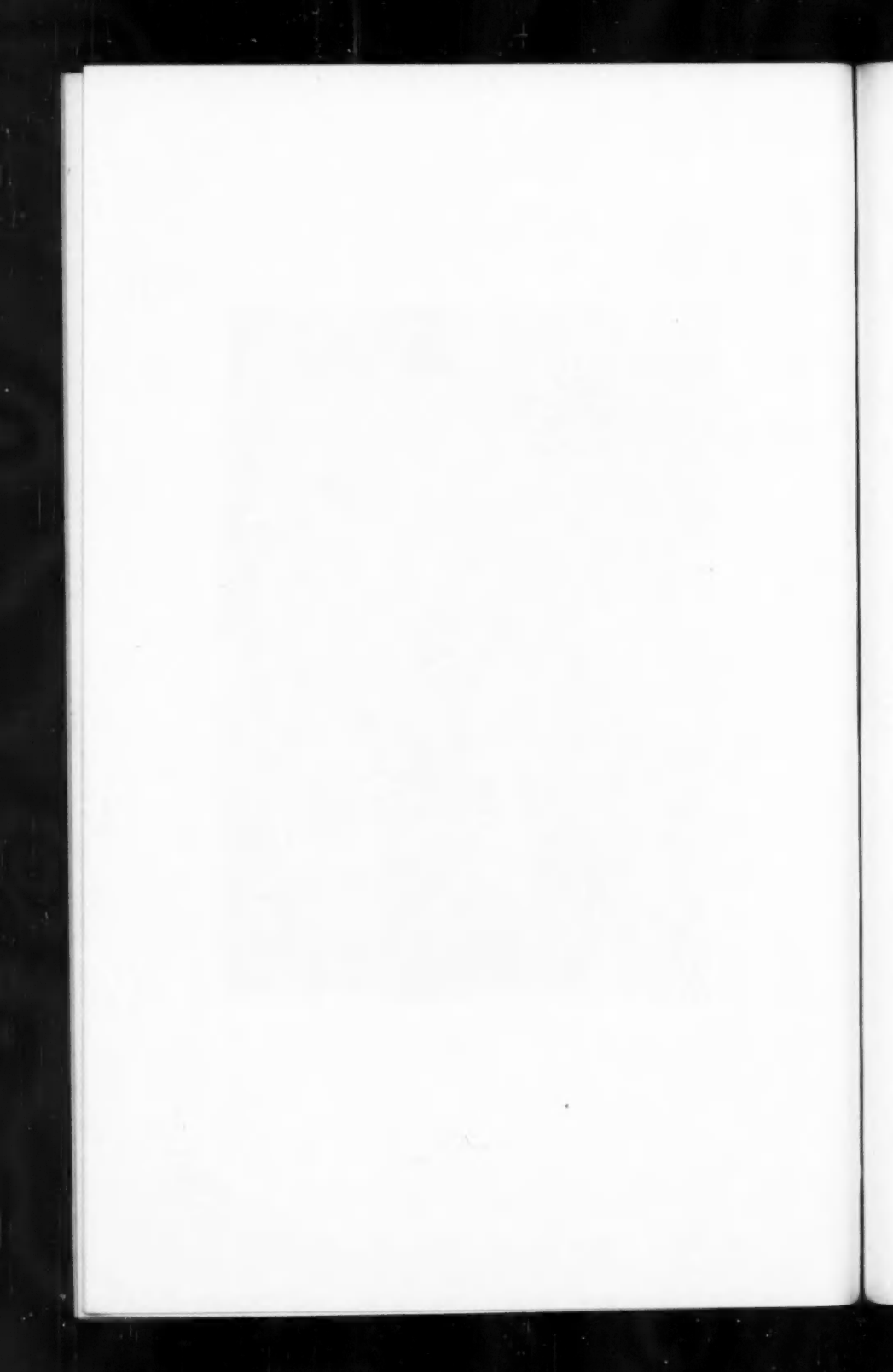
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<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.



(Courtesy Robert M. McBride & Co.)

**EDWARD HUNGERFORD**



goes by train. For example, he describes the old Cooperstown Station on the Delaware and Hudson, now converted into a museum housing the works and memorabilia of James Fenimore Cooper. He also tells how the historic Mohawk Valley (frequently mentioned in *The Leatherstocking Tales*) became the chief artery for western travel on foot, by stage coach, canal and finally the main line of the strategic New York Central. In short, Edward Hungerford does not let the scenery interfere with his interest in railroads nor allow the carriers to detract one whit from the grandeur of rural New York.

In *The Personality of American Cities* the author takes a trip to the distinctive metropolitan centers and interprets their spirit and atmosphere as surprisingly few writers are capable of doing. The book can be likened to Lin Yutang's *My Country and My People*, in that it gives a rare insight into our American people as the noted Chinese man of letters does with his kinfolk. It's a long way from the Levant to Louisiana and yet Hungerford has something of the Easterner's mellowness and wisdom enabling him to comprehend the basic differences of New Orleans with, say, Chicago or New York. He has a bigness of view which, curiously enough, permits him to see the little things that make up our diversified nation. It is true, nevertheless, that Lin Yutang has a definite philosophy, sometimes stated, sometimes implied, running through his book and hardly any mention of a railroad. It is equally apparent that Edward Hungerford has a railroad, frequently mentioned and often alluded to, coursing through his work, and barely any reference to philosophy. But each has a story—a human story of life, of hopes, of ideals—a story which transcends man-made philosophy or mechanized transportation. Both look at people through the eyes of the individual, whether it be a Canton coolie or a Pittsburgh trolley conductor, as if to say: kindly folk, all.

In reviewing the earlier travel books one comes across Eli Bowen, a postal official and writer who emphasized the railroads in a real Hungerfordian manner. Indeed, his volumes became a common sight in many a Pennsylvania household and even today they may be found in the "ancestral" libraries of the older inhabitants. Bowen's most popular work—*The Pictorial Sketch-Book of Pennsylvania* was first published in 1852. In it he describes a trip over the Reading from Philadelphia to the anthracite coal regions as well as a tour over the sprawling Pennsylvania Railroad from the "Quaker City" to the growing industrial metropolis of Pittsburgh. To enrich an already fascinating description of the "Keystone State," Bowen garnished the work with bits of verse saturated in local color. Nowhere is the general tenor of the book brought out more clearly than in the following poem:

We hear no more the clanking hoof,  
And the stage-coach rattling by;  
For the steam-king rules the travelled world,  
And the pike is left to die.  
The grass creeps over the flinty path,  
And the stealthy daisies steal  
Where once the stage-horse, day by day,  
Lifted his iron-heel.

No more the weary stager dreads  
The toil of the coming morn;  
No more the bustling landlord runs  
At the sound of the echoing horn;  
For the dust lies still upon the road,  
And the bright-eyed children play,  
Where once the clattering hoof and wheel  
Rattled along the way.

No more do we hear the cracking whip,  
Or the strong wheels' rumbling sound;  
An oh! the water drives us on,  
And an iron horse is found!  
The coach stands rusting in the yard,  
And the horse has sought the plow;  
We have spanned the world with an iron rail,  
And the steam-king rules us now!

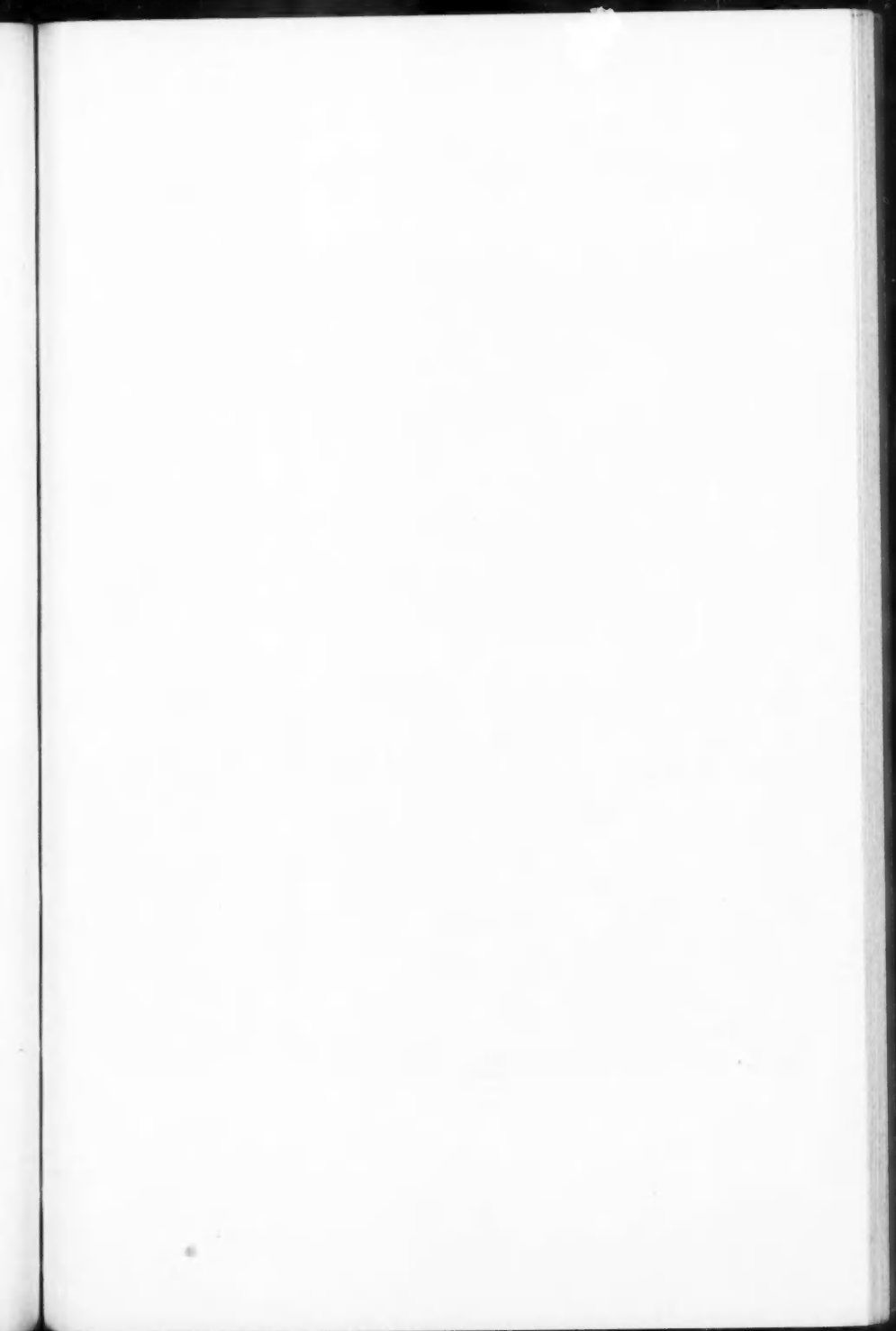
The old turnpike is a pike no more—  
Wide open stands the gate;  
We've made a road for our horse to stride,  
Which we ride at a flying rate;  
We have filled the valleys and levelled the hills,  
And tunneled the mountain side;  
And round the rough craig's dizzy verge,  
Fearless now we ride!

On—on—on—with a haughty front!  
A puff, a shriek, and a bound:  
While the tardy echoes wake too late  
To babble back the sound:  
And the old pike road is left alone,  
And the staggers seek the plow;  
We have circled the earth with an iron rail,  
And the steam-king rules us now!

Bowen's other travel publication is fittingly called *Rambles In the Path of the Steam-Horse*. In the author's own words it is an "off-hand olla-podidra" dedicated to Messrs. Brown, Thomas, and Winans of the pioneer Baltimore and Ohio Railroad. The book deals primarily with a journey over the B. & O. from Baltimore to Wheeling.

With the completion of the first transcontinental railway in 1869 there came a flood of western travel and descriptive literature which was fed to the effete Easterners in large quantities. Travel books are mostly to inform, and inform they did with some overstatements which can be condoned only on the ground that the occasion was one of the really great achievements of the age. Perhaps the best known author to picture western rail travel was Samuel Bowles whose work included *Our New West* and *The Pacific Railroad—Open*. Some of these popular accounts were written before the completion of the Pacific Railroad when the authors went to the farthest railhead and then managed as best they could; others of a later date describe the entire trip by train, but few of them concentrate on the carriers themselves. To be sure there are quaint and rather complete pictures of day coach travel, yet the multitudes of sights in a new and undeveloped land engrossed most of the rider's attention. The railway was a means to an end and not the end itself. In connection with the opening up of vast new regions







we may mention Michael M. Shoemaker who in his *The Great Siberian Railway* describes a tour across Asia from St. Petersburg to Peking. And of the newly completed Hudson Bay Railroad in Canada Courtney Ryley Cooper has written a semi-travel book entitled *Go North, Young Man!*

The name of Jack London is familiar to many readers but how many know of his gusty adventures in riding the rods, clinging to the blinds, or "decking" the limiteds as recounted in *The Road*? Another comparatively little known semi-travel book with a strong geographical background is Albert P. Brigham's *From Trail to Railway Through the Appalachians*. And then there is Christopher Morley, that ubiquitous Pennsylvanian who bobs up in almost every other chapter. Yet is there anyone living in the old city at the confluence of the Delaware and Schuylkill Rivers who has not yet enjoyed "Kit's" *Travels In Philadelphia*? (Who, pray, but Morley, would think of calling Ridge Avenue, the "Sam Brown Belt" of the Quaker city because of its diagonal course, or render the common carriers so much wordage without alienating a host of non-railroad minded readers.)

There are, of course, a mass of travel publications issued by the various railroads which unfortunately cannot be enumerated in this little study. For the most part they, along with the innumerable out-and-out guide books, are more descriptive than literary and are not suitable for general reading, unless a trip is contemplated over the line in question.

Because of the tremendous growth of the automobile and the greatly restricted field of the electric car in recent years, it is easy to forget that the latter played an important role in catering to the tourist. Nowhere in the world was the trolley such an important social influence as in our United States. One could, and on rare occasions did, go from Philadelphia to Portland, Maine, by electric car; but for a real marathon trip there was nothing like the Portland to Milwaukee trek, with only two "breaks" aggregating less than sixty miles. Small wonder there were books on trolley travel to delight pre-automobile America. A unique little volume of this type is Clinton W. Lucas' *A Trolley Honeymoon from Delaware to Maine*, describing a 500-mile trip from Wilmington to York Beach on the cars. The author catches the spirit of the era in his introductory verse:

A shady road with a grassy track,  
A car that follows free;  
A summer's scene at early morn—  
A nickel for a fee."

Another book describing a trip over much the same route is *The Trolley Car and the Lady*. Its author, William J. Lampton, disregards the old saw adjuring one not to run after a street car or a woman inasmuch as there'll be another along in a few minutes as he hurries by electric car from New York City to York Beach, Maine, in quest of a certain young lady on a trolley party who later becomes his wife. Of a somewhat different nature is Howard W. Kriebel's *Seeing Lancaster County From a Trolley Window*. It is mainly concerned with the

towns and hamlets of the thrifty Pennsylvania Dutch folk in the chief tobacco raising area of the "Keystone State."

But the field of trolleyana would not be complete without some reference to the compact little guide books distributed in the East. Just as we have the automobile tour books and route guides today, so the trolley tourists had their courses charted, and books compiled by authorities on electric car travel. Such titles as *By Trolley Through Eastern New England* and its companionative guide *By Trolley Through Western New England*, edited by Robert H. Derrah, a pioneer street and interurban railway touring councilor, were very popular and widely used. Other standard guides include *The Trolley Wayfinder*, *Trolley Exploring*, and *The Trolley Tourist*, compiled by John J. Lane, Cromwell Childe, and E. H. Rosenberger respectively. Then, too, several eastern states issued electric railway maps and at least one firm, (The Price Publishing Company, Lima, Ohio) specialized in interurban maps of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois. And years later when the early automobile Blue Books supplanted the electric railway guides, they in turn will be remembered for their countless exhortations to "bear right with trolley," "follow trolley line to fork of road"—forming as it were, a gradual transition from rail to road.

Anyone who is familiar with the travel literature issued by many foreign railways knows what a superb job they have done. Many an American upon seeing an unusual painting reproduced in a British book will naturally conclude the *objet d'art* is in a rare and expensive volume on the old masters. And then, shades of Fra Lippi Lippi, he looks at the imprint and to his amazement finds it published by the Great Western Railway or one of the other three systems in England. It should be added, nevertheless, that most travel publications are sold and not given away as in this country although one can get a veritable tome on holiday resorts for a trifle. Then, too, many of the continental roads, being state owned, publish lavish booklets advertising the nation as a whole. In Asia, the South Manchurian Railway not only fulfills its obligation as a carrier but also has civil and police jurisdiction over a considerable area adjacent to the right of way. A good deal of its travel literature and propaganda is disseminated in the United States.

It is interesting to know that from the pen of a famous English author comes the best account of a trip over the ill-fated Pennsylvania State Works from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh. Charles Dickens recounts the experiences of his arduous journey in *American Notes*. Stevenson likewise will be remembered for his realistic essay *Across the Plains*, an account of the ordeals of rail travel in the United States not long after the driving of the last spike which united the East and the West. Then some thirty years later Kipling gives his critique on the operation and management of American railroads in a portion of *From Sea to Sea*. However, he is at his best when describing the Indian carriers in the selection "Among the Railway Folk" included in the same work. Incidentally, while on the subject of Asiatic travel, John W. Mitchell's *The Wheels of Ind* gives an excellent modern account of numerous trips on the railways of India.

It is generally conceded that Americans travel abroad far more

extensively than do Europeans who come to this country. But to the English must be given credit for producing one cosmopolitan rail traveler who makes all others appear as prosy commuters. The record-holder is J. P. Pearson and his title to that claim may be found in four thick volumes entitled *Railways and Scenery* describing with appalling thoroughness his "clocking" and note-taking on railroad trips over the entire globe. As straight reading matter it requires an inordinate degree of fortitude; yet because of its comprehensive scope, detailed observation, and gross magnitude it is included in this chapter. And, all other statements to the contrary notwithstanding, when taken in homeopathic doses it makes for untold delight especially if the reader is familiar with some of the many routes outlined in the series. Surely Mr. Pearson by virtue of his magnum opus can easily be accorded the enviable distinction of being the world's greatest railway traveler.

Summarizing, we find that the railroad, more than any other agency, made travel literature what it is today. The fact that highway, airway, and to a lesser extent, waterway transportation, have beckoned to the prospective traveler as appealingly as the railways in recent years does not vitiate the fact that the Iron Horse was the real pioneer in its development. The trunk lines made publications of this category stand on their own feet, made them, in short, an important and distinct phase of letters. Incidentally, the trolley lines, too, in a much more limited way had their own books and leaflets on local town-to-town attractions serving as a brief prelude to the automobile tour books which were destined to supplant them.

### Bibliography of Travel Books

In this compilation only travel books of a literary or semi-literary nature are given. All publications issued by railroad companies are excluded together with volumes which are of a strictly reference or guide-book category. A separate list of trolley guides, however, is given because of the trolley's contribution to an almost forgotten phase of American touring. Publications issued by individual electric lines are not included. For explanation of symbols and additional notes on bibliographies see page 15.

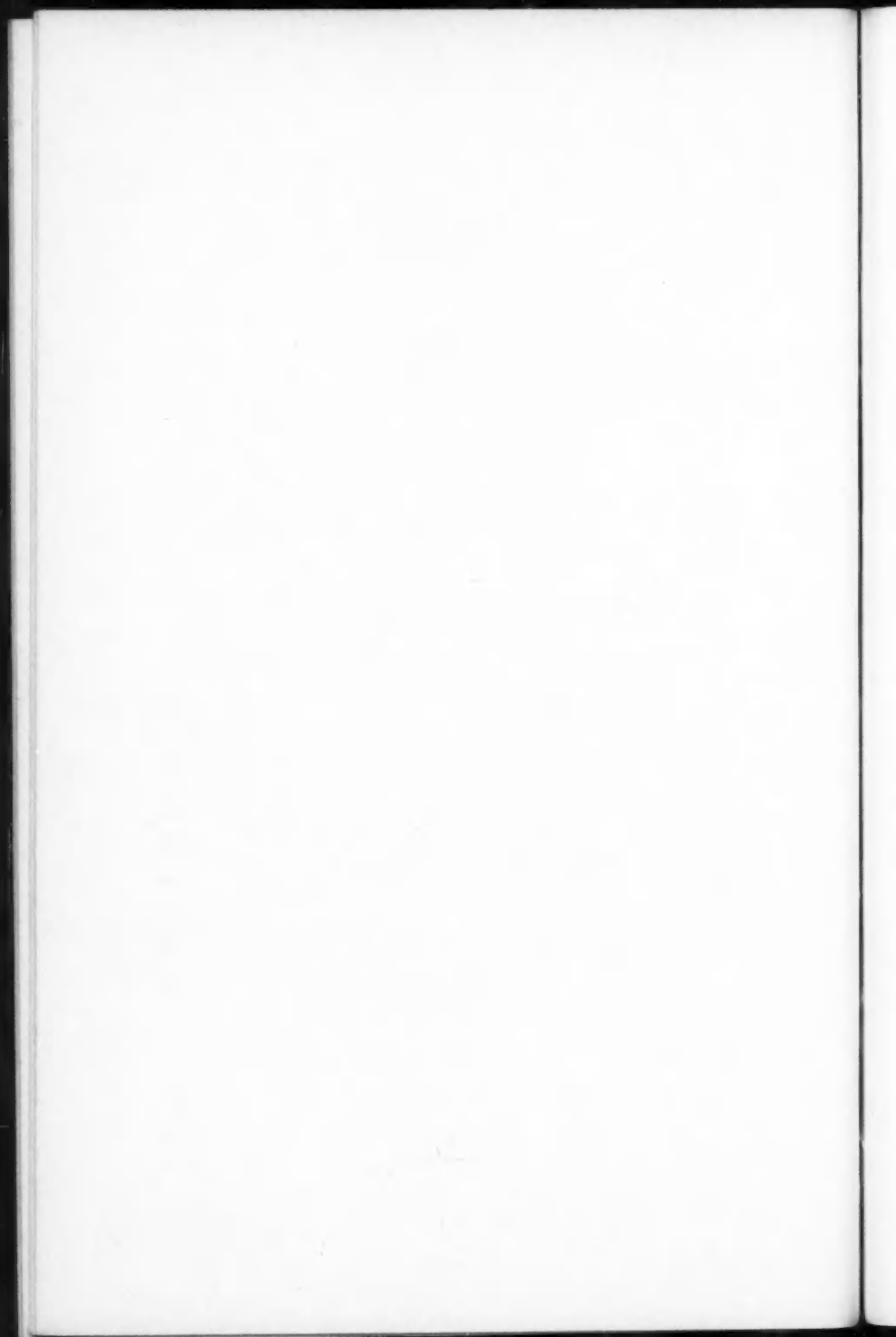
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(Courtesy Harper & Brothers)

WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS

## CHAPTER XI

### Drama and Photoplay

The railroad has never been very important on the American stage, for railroad drama has seldom met the test of time or box office receipts. There have been, however, a few moderately successful performances in which the action takes place in a train or station. The main reason why the Iron Horse has such a short run on the stage is obvious—the physical limitations of the stage. Even if one could waive all tangible objections, the popularity of the carriers in motion pictures would not necessarily follow on the stage. The motion picture audience looks for action, thrills, and none too deep plots; the other for a certain amount of finesse and restraint. Moreover, it may be that gross action (from the public's standpoint) is more representative of this industry than the delicate skill and refinement found in many successful plays. If this be true, the suitable place for a railroad setting is the cinema—not the stage.

Unfortunately many of the better railroad plays have never appeared in book form whereas the good old melodrama of yesterday often came in cheap paper bound editions for popular consumption. Granted the latter is flimsy stuff whose cultural value is nil, it should be like the dime novel of considerable sociological and historical significance. There have been many stage thrillers and ephemeral movie hits rewritten as paper jacket novels which although copyrighted, even the Library of Congress has not seen fit to preserve.

Among the few semi-railroad plays which stand out as worthy of recognition from a literary viewpoint are the carefully written farces of William Dean Howells. This many-sided moralist and anti-romanticist was born in Martin's Ferry, Ohio, March 1, 1837. His education was scant consisting of intermittent grade school attendance and sporadic tutoring. And yet this boy who never went to high school, much less college, later received honorary degrees from six universities including Oxford and rejected professorships offered him by Harvard, Yale and Johns Hopkins.

His father, a country editor, started young Howells in journalism, at the age of nine, as a composer in his own press. But the youth always had a gift for writing and was overjoyed to accept the position of reporter, exchange editor, and editorial writer on the *Ohio State Journal* in 1856. Five years later President Lincoln sent him as United States consul to Venice where Howells became deeply interested in the Italian language and literature. In 1865 he returned to America where he joined the staff of the *New York Nation*. A short time afterward he became sub-editor for the *Atlantic Monthly* and in 1871 was made editor-in-chief. For a brief period he also edited the *Cosmopolitan Magazine*; yet his greatest fame came with his writings in "The Easy Chair" for *Harper's Magazine* from 1900 to 1920. He wrote over a hundred books consisting of novels, plays, essays, poetry, travel and description. Among his best known works are *A Modern Instance*

(1882), *The Rise of Silas Lapham* (1885), and *A Hazard of New Fortunes* (1900). William Dean Howells died on May 11, 1920.

Several of Howells' farces, although not entirely of a railroad nature, have their setting in a train or station. With the exception of *The Parlor Car*, all his plays of this type deal with four characters—the Willis Campbells and the Edward Robertses. And yet this fashionable quartet representing the culture and refinement of Boston in the latter part of the nineteenth century are deftly put in alien roles. Probably *The Sleeping Car* is the best in the group, for it shows the humor and cleverness of Howells in creating unusual situations. Mrs. Roberts with her baby and aunt appear on a Boston and Albany sleeper bound for "the Hub" where she will meet her brother Mr. Willis Campbell from California, whom she has not seen for years. In a chain of hilarious events she eventually finds him on the train but not until the occupants of the whole car are aware of her presence. By an undercurrent of timely remarks coming from the annoyed sleepers it is apparent that they do not get much rest that night.

In *The Albany Depot* (the B. & A. station in Boston) the setting is a little different although not wanting in complexity. Here Mr. Roberts (the scapegoat as usual) is asked to meet a new cook in the waiting room while his wife is out shopping. Not having seen the maid in question, he accosts a buxom woman and politely inquires if she might be the long expected domestic. But, alas, the lady is none other than Mrs. Mary McIlheny, wife of Michael McIlheny, an inebriated gentleman with an unmistakable brogue. The irate Mike is for fighting Roberts then and there, and it is only through the tact and diplomacy of Mr. Campbell that blows are forestalled. But the reeling drunk continues to return until the arrival of the tardy cook who fancies she has been insulted by Mike's disparaging comments on her social status, and makes for the loquacious tosspot. This promptly shuts up the McIlhenies husband and wife, just in time for the Robertses to board their train.

*The Smoking Car* likewise has its setting on the same road, on a suburban local to Newton Centre, the destination of the Roberts-Campbell quartet. The responsibility of an unclaimed baby left in Mr. Roberts' care is the reason for much laughter and merriment in the group.

In *The Parlor Car* a young engaged couple who have previously quarrelled become reconciled in an Albany-bound New York Central train. But it takes a jammed coach window, a wreck, and a detached car to turn the trick.

These little farces show the elements of fine craftsmanship, an easy flowing style, and good material based on everyday observation, but assembled in such a way as to create extraordinary situations. There are no jerry-made pot boilers in any of Howell's long list of works. Like the *Atlantic* he edited, the name "Howells" is a colophon of good writing. His realism is that of the selective middle-of-the-road type, neither superficial nor Zolaesque. And he rarely, if ever, lets his characters get out of hand, not even in his farces, where it could easily be overlooked. Howells, in short, keeps within the bounds of realism and restraint.

Apart from the plays of William Dean Howells, even the best railroad drama is not destined to have a box seat in the theatrical branch of literature. But just as the simplest stage curtain has innumerable threads to hold it intact, so the railroad performances, in the aggregate, give a reasonably good cross section of the Dramatic Scene over a period of years. Viewed in this respect it is an interesting commentary on a changing theater, which after all reflects an evolving society within a nation.

One of the earliest American semi-railroad plays was Augustin Daly's *Under the Gaslight*. Here was melodrama—gross, blunt, yet inordinately successful. The climax depicted a wounded soldier tied on the track whilst the villain with the customary high hat and nicely pointed mustache stands leering in the background. Meanwhile the army man's love is locked in an adjacent signal shanty as the ray of a headlight illuminates the ghastly plot. Luckily, however, the heroine finds an ax and chops down the shanty just in time to switch the fast express into a siding.

The play, first presented on August 12, 1867, was to reach its one-hundredth performance in January of the following year.<sup>54</sup> Nothing, it seems, save time itself could hinder its popularity. Even the fact that the "train" broke in two during an early performance did not dampen the enthusiastic applause at the end of the act.<sup>55</sup> For many months thereafter vaudeville artist, novelty performers, minstrel players, and "sketch artists" were hard at work devising far-fetched imitations of the railroad play.<sup>56</sup>

Although Daly was to write many more plays, *Under the Gaslight* marked the end of his interest in the Iron Horse and, incidentally, just about terminated railroad drama until after the panic of 1873.<sup>57</sup> Notwithstanding the title of his later production—*The Railway of Love*,—a revision of *Goldfische*, the work of Von Schönthan and Kadelburg, its reference to the railroad is purely allegorical.

There were from time to time other railroad plays but they do not seem to have been published for general sale. At least the writer has been unable to find them in the ordinary channels of research. The revival, however, seems to have taken place about 1891. In that year Lincoln J. Carter's "Fast Mail" was put in novelized form by Charles Thornton who called it *The Story of the Fast Mail*. This popular play was the first one to show two trains; a slow freight rumbling into a siding to allow an express to go by and pick up a bag of mail hung up on the stage. It lasted until 1899.<sup>58</sup>

Some twenty-three years later Carter wrote *The Bride Special* in which a railroad executive's daughter is whisked away from her suitor in her father's private car. The fiancé, however, with the aid of a friend pursues the special on a switch engine and then lifts the young lady from the observation platform to the pilot of his locomotive. By an ingenious combination of stage and screen the playwright is able to

<sup>54</sup> Cole, Harry W., "Headlights and Footlights," *Railroad Magazine*, Vol. XXIV, No. 6, (November 1938), p. 61.

<sup>55</sup> Daly, Joseph F., *The Life of Augustin Daly*, p. 75.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>57</sup> Cole, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 63.

produce the effect of a moving train. In a note Carter adds that the rescue scene is novel and unique (and perhaps it was), but the novelty has since been repeated countless times to the disgust of many.

One of the best of recent plays is Ernest H. Culbertson's realistic tragedy on the passing of a duty-bound trackwalker entitled "The End of the Trail" in *The American Scene*, edited by Barrett H. Clark and Kenyon Nicholson, and also included in several other well known collections. Then there is Herbert P. Powell's exceedingly clever farce on a stuttering information clerk called *All Aboard* and his sketch entitled *Information, Please*. Other humorous selections are Arthur LeRoy Kaser's little comedy of a section gang called *Working on the Railroad* and *The Turnipville Station Agent*. Probably the only play which concerns electric railroading is *Waiting for the Trolley* by Edward Mumford. It is to be regretted that two recent shows—Archibald McLeish's "Union Pacific" and Robert Ardrey's "Casey Jones"—have never appeared for general publication.

On the English stage the name of Arnold Ridley stands for two successful railway dramas. *The Ghost Train*, written by Ridley, was not only acclaimed in London but was put in an American version and run on Broadway. And his *The Wrecker*, (in which Bernard Merivale collaborated), proved very popular in the British theaters. Incidentally, the play was novelized by Ruth Alexander and enjoyed a relatively wide sale in America. Yet however popular railroad acts were at the time of their showing, practically none of them have been given a permanent place in standard dramatic literature.

With the coming of motion pictures the out-and-out railroad melodrama of the theater was rapidly being shifted to the cinema with more than a little success. In fact, the first genuine narrative film in this country was "The Great Train Robbery," a revision of A. B. Woods' *The Great Express Robbery*, novelized by Grace Miller White in 1903. It is interesting to know that Thomas Edison, a former newsvender on passenger trains, saw the play and discussed it with Edwin S. Porter, one of his camera men. Porter later re-edited the work for the screen and thereby made the first railroad "movie" ever produced in this country.<sup>59</sup> Fortunately this pioneer one-reel film, packed with gunplay and murder, has been preserved and shown by societies interested in historic motion pictures.

It was soon discovered that photoplays were capable of portraying difficult railroad scenes, even more readily than the stage. Almost from that day to this there has been a long list of films of all types and gradations featuring the railroad in one way or another. But, alas, only a few have been put in book form for permanent record in the transitory world of filmdom. Perhaps the most successful photoplay in this category was *The Iron Horse* which was put in fiction by Edwin C. Hill. The picture featured the building of the Union Pacific and the linking of the rails at Promontory Summit in 1869. Other sound pictures which appeared in print are *The Dixie Flyer*, by H. H. Van Loan, and the *Bombay Mail*, by Lawrence G. Blochman, a well known English mystery writer. Then, of course, there were Frank H. Spearman's

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 65.

inimitable stories, such as "The Love Special," "The Runaway Express," *Whispering Smith*, and "The Yellow Mail," taken almost directly from his books.

Turning to the more recent bookings, one finds Frederick Nebel's masterly detective story *Sleepers East* and Graham Greene's cosmopolitan setting of adventure and intrigue in the *Orient Express*, both having a good run on the screen. Conan Doyle's "The Lost Special," like Greene's story, came from the pen of an English writer whose works have appeared in American photoplays. As would be expected the ever-popular account of the Andrews Raiders during the War of Secession appeared on the screen in *The General*, a somewhat distorted version, novelized by Joseph Warren. But just as Edwin C. Hill's *The Iron Horse* was extremely popular years ago, so "Union Pacific," taken in part from Ernest Haycox's *Trouble Shooter*, is expected to become a real hit at this writing. For are they not about the same subject handled in a different manner?

The unprecedented ballyhooing of streamlined trains has been carried over to the screen in *The Silver Streak*, by Roger Whately. This is said to be the first picture on railroad streamlining to appear in American films. Of a direct contrast to the swift, projectile-shaped limiteds and swallow tail observation lounges was Russell Holman's *Speedy*, the story of a not-so-rapid horse-car line in Manhattan. It is probably the only street-railway film to be made into a novel.

Many of the common railroad bookings while not profound in character often show extensive preparation and reasonably good railroading. Indeed some of the larger studios have an assortment of rolling stock varying in size from standard to 00 gage dimensions and numerous accessories commensurate with their needs. For example, the Warner Brothers studio has a train shed with two real Pullmans, some home-made European coaches, a prop street car, and a Pacific Electric trolley. In another division of the same studio one comes across a village station and three box cars.<sup>60</sup>

Occasionally, however the motion picture producers fail to give the Iron Horse its due. A good illustration of this is in the filming of Kipling's *Captains Courageous* where Harvey Cheyne's father was portrayed as an airplane official instead of a railroad executive, thus dispensing with the record run of the special train. And in William Wisler Haines' *Slim* the fascinating chapters on electrifying a trunk-line are left out entirely.

Summing up we find the railroad play of comparatively little importance in dramatic literature. With the exception of Howells' farces and a few other selections, most of the plays, while popular for a time, are soon forgotten.

The motion picture, on the other hand, is better adapted to the requirements of a railway production both in regard to physical layout and audience reaction. Starting with "The Great Train Robbery" and

<sup>60</sup> Bailey, Philip & Laing, A. B., "Railroads and the Movies," *Railroad Magazine*, Vol. XXII, No. 4, (September 1937), p. 12.

continuing up to the present day, photoplays pertaining to this industry, either wholly or in part, have been relatively successful and well received. Although only a small percentage of these have appeared in print, some of the best railroad novels have been shown on the screen.

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 Whately, Roger; O'Donnell, Jack and Hanemann, H. W. "The Silver Streak."  
 THE SILVER STREAK.  
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## CHAPTER XII

### Miscellaneous Books

Minorities, whether political, economic or religious, often have a profound and far-reaching effect upon the destiny of a nation. They are like a painting in which the colors and shades are nicely blended to create a definite atmosphere; yet by a slip of the brush and dab of paint, the whole symmetry of the work is suddenly changed. In American life there is an abundance of such slips, some by their very nature inherent in the texture and color of the paint, others due solely to its application irrespective of the materials used. In people this is called personality; in geography, local color, both being related to each other as rails are to locomotives.

Somewhere between the engine and caboose of the long train of railway literature, there are small shipments, individually unimportant, but collectively going a long way to enrich the road of letters. One of these L. C. L. packages is humble wit, billed from way stations all over the land. Our country has always had a naive humor interwoven with sectionalism and allied with the steam and electric railway. And it is American to the core!

Let us take, for example, the Toonerville Folks as limned by Fontaine Fox. One cannot find Toonerville in an atlas, no matter how thoroughly one looks, but there is scarcely a village in the United States which is better known. Likewise none of its townsmen have been selected to grace the pages of *Who's Who*, but what real hamlet can support such a galaxy of famous names as The Skipper, Mickey (Himself) McGuire, The Powerful Katrinka, Tomboy Taylor, Aunt Eppie Hogg and the Terrible Tempered Mr. Bang? Of these, the Skipper, along with his antiquated trolley, is by far the most important. As a matter of fact, his vehicle was inspired by the old street cars of a run-down belt-line in Louisville, Kentucky, and a small electric car on a short stub line in Westchester County, New York, from Pelham Station to Pelham Manor. The Skipper, himself, represents the aged motor-man conductor on the Westchester road. Indeed, when the cartoon was first made into a photoplay some eighteen years ago there was a real Skipper in the person of Daniel Mason and an actual Toonerville Trolley on the route of the now defunct Phoenixville, Valley Forge and Strafford Electric Railway Company in Pennsylvania.

In the last analysis Fox's cartoons are merely an accretion of little things, humanized and exaggerated. Taken singly, they are petty incidents, laughed at today, forgotten tomorrow; taken as a whole they present a very significant phase of rural America. Perhaps we can best sum this up in the words of Preston William Slossen. Speaking of the value of these caricatures, Dr. Slossen says:

Fontaine Fox's sketches of Toonerville were more genial and therefore more effective satire on American small town life than Sinclair Lewis' *Main Street* or its hundred imitators.<sup>61</sup>

<sup>61</sup> Slossen, Preston William, *The Great Crusade and After*, p. 356.

And are not the Toonerville Trolley and the Skipper the very backbone of these cartoons?

Many of Fox's characters and their antics are preserved in his three books—*F. Fox's Funny Folk, Cartoons*, and the *Toonerville Trolley and Other Cartoons*.

A somewhat cruder humor is found in Thomas W. Jackson's *On a Slow Train Through Arkansas* embodying the jokes, yarns and stories of the typical American drummer. This book together with innumerable paper-bound volumes of a similar nature, abound in stories of backwoods railroads, jerkwater locals, and the arrival-of-the-engineer's-dog-before-the-train themes. Closely allied with branch line waggers, although not in itself of a droll nature, are the western train robbery episodes as depicted in Robertus Love's *The Rise and Fall of Jesse James* and western thrillers. Both the comic and the tragic, in their extremes, were the selling points of a certain type of day-coach literature, at one time sold in trains throughout the United States. Like the dime novel they have until recently been ignored, and again like the penny dreadful, their popularity, aside from the collector's items, is definitely on the wane. Just as the engineer's chewing tobacco and the section man's red bandanna handkerchief form a miscellaneous part of railroading, so the paper-bound off-shoots of literature describe, as it were, a typical bit of Americana. The drummer and the train robber, like the cowcatcher and grade crossing, will forever be adjuncts, at least in the eyes of the foreigner, of railroads in this country. Nowhere is the recrudescence of the frontier spirit more clearly brought out than in the realistic paintings of Thomas Benton, Grant Wood, Charles Burchfield, and other local color artists. Benton, especially in his murals, used the desperado and funnel-stack locomotive to bring back the flavor of the Old West.

Speaking of art and trains brings one, willy nilly, to a group of railroad artists, small in number but select in quality. Like all revered professions they have their old masters who are, of course, Mr. Currier and Mr. Ives. Regarded as small fry in their day, time has given them a *summa cum laude* in lithography, and the price of their remaining works is evaluated accordingly. If fortune has come your way, you may secure their masterpieces in Henry T. Peters' limited edition of *Currier and Ives, Printmakers to the American People*. On the other hand, for the coach and occasional Pullman passenger, Fred J. Peters' *Railroad, Indian, and Pioneer Prints* bears a more realistic relationship to the moderately filled pocket book. But all good art should be put in cheap editions, and indeed it has in Russel Crouse's *Mr. Currier and Mr. Ives*, which is designed for the habitual day coach user and excursionist. Crouse, however, has done a Pullman car job which due to its popularity can be sold at commutation rates.

In recent years the Iron Horse has staged a comeback on canvas as well as on the rails. Two exponents of modernism in relation to the carriers are Otto Kuhler and A. Sheldon Pennoyer. The former specializes in modern railroad paintings and is probably the leading spirit in bringing the locomotive back in art. In *Portraits of the Iron Horse*, the joint work of Kuhler and Robert S. Henry, are numerous repre-

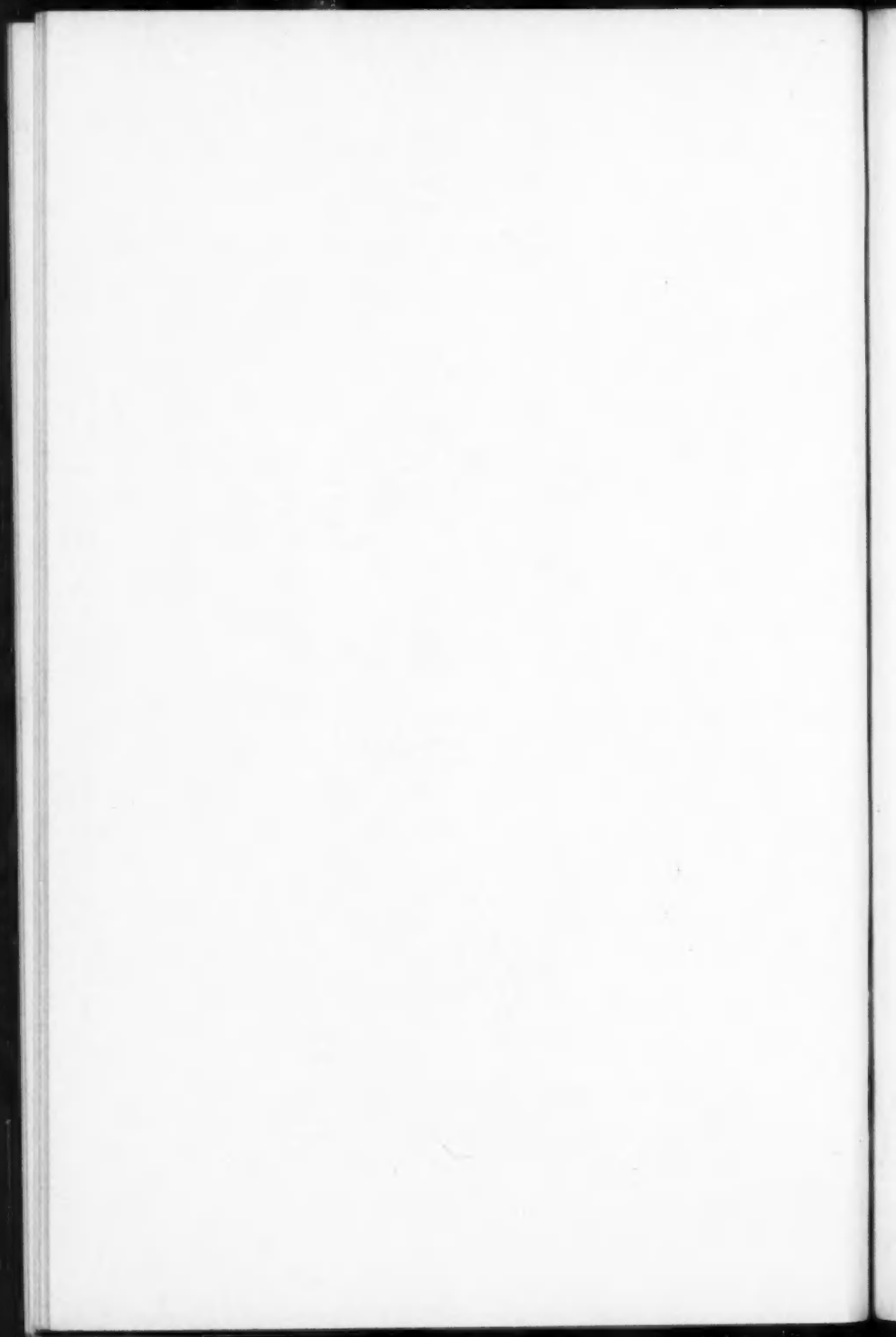
## TOONERVILLE FOLKS

25



(Courtesy Fontaine Fox)

THE TOONERVILLE TROLLEY AND THE NATIVES OF TOONERVILLE



sentative sketches. Incidentally, Mr. Henry, a well known railroad publicist, does as well on the historical end of the book as the artist does on the pictorial. And Pennoyer, too, specializes in painting both up to date equipment and old time scenes. Probably his best work in the line of historical engines appeared in the magazine *Fortune* of June 1931. He has also edited a collection of woodcuts and engravings called *This Was California*.

Throughout this little book all references to general works on railroading have been scrupulously avoided since an additional volume or more would be required to do them justice. But we cannot forbear mentioning Lucius Beebe's *High Iron* as a brilliant example of surcharged railroad atmosphere—a veritable cavalcade of trains sweeping through print and photography, from the romantic past to a wonderous future. Probably the nearest thing to it in English literature is Cyril B. Andrews' *The Railway Age* which describes the amenities and also the hardships of early rail travel in the British Isles. In general, however, the style, point of view, and personal slants of British and American authors are so different that it is better to stress their variations than their similarities. Probably the English drollery as found in John Aye's *Humour on the Rail* has more of an American flavor than the orthodox English books on the permanent way.

The cubby holes of railroad miscellanea reveal a multitude of curious volumes—oddments on this and that, quirks of violent personal biases, and trivialities on petty subjects run to the ground. For example, if anyone aspires to become a master commuter, let him read Ed Streeter's hilarious travelogue entitled *Daily Except Sundays*. Or for those who desire scholarship and minute details Frank Folupa's *Notes on the Collection of Transfers* is the last and only word on the subject. Then, too, there are books for the reader of catholic tastes such as the *Wonders and Curiosities of the Railway*, by William Sloane Kennedy, bringing out the odd and little known happenings of the carriers all over the world. Yet for sheer adventure there are few true events which can surpass William Pittenger's *The Great Locomotive Chase*, recounting that ill-fated Yankee raid in Georgia during the War of the States. Other exciting tales include Howard A. Pedrick's *Jungle Gold*, describing an abortive attempt at railroad building in Dutch Guiana, and C. B. Glascock's *Bandits and the Southern Pacific* with its locale in Southern California.

Concluding, we find the out-of-the-ordinary book generally gives a peculiar insight into some quaint or isolated section of the country. Most standard works on the carriers dwell chiefly with Class I railroads and efficient main lines which form a well integrated part of the nation's transportation machine. Important as they are, however, the fact cannot be ignored that nearly one-half of American traffic originates or ends on branch roads. Similarly many of the typical American customs and habits have their origin in sectionalism, and they, too, should not be overlooked. Hence a book which has local color at the expense of literary polish is not without its value. Like the humble branch line it serves as a feeder, blending the warm tones of rural American life with the stable patterns of dignified literature.

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*Bride Special, The*,  
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*Celestial Railroad, The*,  
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*Chicago Ledger, The*,  
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*Diamond Jim*,  
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*Johnny Reb,*  
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*McTeague*,  
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*Main Line West*,  
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*"Man Underground"*,  
*Manager of the B & A, The*,  
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*Mark Enderby, Engineer*,  
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